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THE BONHAMS OF WILTSHIRE AND ESSEX

by
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C. H. WOODWARD
EXCHANGE BUILDING, STATION ROAD
DEVIZES

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PART I
BONHAMS OF WILTSHIRE

CHAPTER I

BONHAM

No serious record of a family pedigree can ever make very light reading. To be of any value at all it must deal laboriously with each generation, no matter how dull, and give chapter and verse for each descent; but need it, I wonder, be a mere gloomy echo of the 'begat' chapters in the Bible? In tracing the records of any family one occasionally comes across an old will, a lawsuit or some other stray evidence which makes the dead live and gives us a true portrait of an individual in a long line of shadows. These are the plums in the genealogist's pudding and I have tried here to make the most of them, while not neglecting the solid duff in which they are necessarily set.

The branch of the Bonham family in which I am particularly interested has two serious gaps in what is otherwise a very clear pedigree. They trace back their ancestry, quite comfortably if not particularly eventfully, to one Samuel Bonham, a successful seaman and merchant, who died in 1744/5 at the age of sixty-eight. Here comes the first gap. Burke says that Samuel was descended from the Bonhams of Stanway Hall in Essex and for at least two generations much time and trouble have been taken to establish this connexion, but so far without any definite result. Mid-Victorian romanticism got very busy with the elusive Samuel. He was said to have held high command in the Navy and (with a shocking disregard for dates) to have taken a Dutch ship, a gallant feat for which he obtained no recognition, on account of his Jacobite sympathies. The family were said to have been ruined by their adherence to the Stuart cause and the legend that Samuel's father had died at the Stuart Court at St. Germain became so well established in the family that one member of it is said to have gone there to seek his tomb, 'only to find that it had been destroyed in the French Revolution'. Sir Walter Bonham, who

fought at the battle of Pinkie in the reign of Henry VIII, was boldly transferred to the seventeenth century and made to figure as the father of Samuel and 'a colonel on the side of the Royalists in the Civil wars'. These amiable family fictions formed the subject of an exchange of letters, especially between female members of the family, in mid-Victorian days. Then came a gleam of sanity, when one distressed lady wrote to another that some horrid person had suggested to her that Samuel had been engaged in the slave trade. And so it proved to be. The shock seems to have damped the enthusiasm of the lady genealogists of the family.

Samuel, who is one of the plums in my pudding, was a great sea-captain and engaged so successfully in the then highly respectable trade of slave dealing that he not only became a churchwarden of Ratcliff hamlet but amassed a large fortune and retired and built Orsett House in Essex. His father, I believe, was an Essex yeoman, or possibly, a bricklayer of Stepney. In any case the background of the Pretender's Court at St. Germain may certainly be swept away. But this does not mean that Burke's statement that he was descended from the Bonhams of Stanway Hall need be swept away with it. Everything, including his purchase of lands in Essex, tends to show that he had some connexion with that county and the descendant of a younger son of the Stanway Hall family may very well have been an Essex yeoman, or even a Stepney bricklayer.

The second gap in the Bonham pedigree comes more than 200 years further back, where the difficulty is to establish the connexion between Thomas Bonham of Stanway Hall, an important personage in the reign of Henry VIII, with the Bonhams of Great Wishford in Wiltshire. This problem will probably also never be solved, nor does it really matter very much, for I think it may confidently be asserted that all Bonhams came originally from the same stock and from the same place, the 'Stammschloss' of Bonham in Somerset. In the Middle Ages the de Bonhams, as they then called themselves, were neither numerous nor dispersed and the name is seldom found very far from their original seat, but the family spread itself in later times and in a note on 'the Tombs, Monuments, etc., lately visible in St. Paul's Cathedral', published in 1685, Major Payne Fisher records the inscription on the tomb of a William Bonham buried in the cathedral in 1628. Payne Fisher was Oliver Cromwell's poet laureate and a notorious time-server and always in debt. He wrote his 'Monuments' in the Fleet Prison, but there is no reason to doubt their accuracy. He states that

there have been men of the name of Bonham of good remark in the counties of Essex, Buckingham, Warwick, Wiltshire and Hampshire. Their stations in life were as diverse as their domiciles and by the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries we find the name held not only by great landowners and merchant princes but by many more humble folk, such as yeomen, husbandmen, graziers, a tailor, a butcher, a carpenter, a labourer, a cordwainer and even a gentleman who made a precarious living by running errands for the prisoners in the Fleet. But I see no reason to doubt that all these Bonhams came of the same stock and that their ancestors hailed originally from the hamlet which gave them their name.

BONHAM

Leland, writing about the year 1540, says : ' There is on a hill, a little without Stourton, a grove, and in it a very praty place called Bonhames, builded of late by my Lord Stourton. Bonhame of Wileshire, of the auncienter House of the Bonhames there, is Lorde of it.'

Leland, if I remember aright, usually dwells more on the solid advantages of the places that he describes than on their beauty, but in this case the word ' praty ' is well bestowed and his description fits the place to this day. It lies in a bower of wood on a ridge overhanging the chain of lakes in the grounds of Stourhead. These lakes in the eighteenth century were adorned with the usual temples, and their steep banks, planted with magnificent trees, are ablaze in early summer with azaleas and rhododendrons. Stourhead is one of the noted beauty spots of the West Country, but very few of the tourists who flock to it find their way up the lovely woodland path which leads to Bonham. The place ' builded of late by my Lord Stourton ' still stands, shorn of its ancient glory and now a farmhouse, but a rebus of the name ' Stourton ' can still be seen built into the wall. It is not a very witty device and consists of a capital **S**, a tower and a tun or barrel surmounted by the letter **W**. Adjoining the farm is a little Catholic church and presbytery, which is held to this day by the Stourton family. The church is commonly said to have been the private chapel of Stourton House, but it seems much more probable that it was formed at a later date out of the ancient hall. There is nothing very striking about the place ; the geography of the house has been completely destroyed by its conversion into a farmhouse, and there is little of architectural interest left, but it has an atmosphere of peace and

distance from all the world and one feels almost as if one could meet Leland round the corner, enjoying its 'pratiness' as he did nearly 500 years ago.

The house was built by Leland's contemporary, William, 7th Baron Stourton, in the reign of Henry VIII, and must have replaced an earlier building of the Bonhams, who, as will be seen presently, had removed to a property which they had inherited at Great Wishford, and leased Bonham to the Stourton family; but the Bonhams still held the lordship of the Manor. It seems, indeed, to have exercised a sort of spell over its owners, for the Bonhams clung to it long after they had had to sell off all their other property and it was only in the time of the 17th Baron Stourton (1720-43/4) that they sold to him the fee of the Manor. The Stourtons, in their turn, when they sold Stourhead to the Hoare family, kept Bonham in their own hands and it was only in 1785 that they parted with it to Henry Hoare, the banker. Even then they reserved the chapel and the presbytery which belong to-day to the present Lord Mowbray and Stourton.

Leland's reference to two branches of the Wiltshire Bonhams also requires a word of explanation. The 'auncienter house' was that of the Bonhams of Bonham and Great Wishford, as distinguished from that of the younger branch which had established itself at Hazelbury in the same county (see my *History of the Manor of Hazelbury*).

The only record that we have of Bonham during the Stourton occupation is a grim one, for it was here that Charles, the 8th Baron and son of the builder of the house, confined the two Hartgills, father and son, on the night before that on which he brutally murdered them, a crime for which he was hanged in a silken halter at Salisbury (see *History of the Manor of Hazelbury*).

The Manor of Bonham lies wholly in Somerset and right on the borders of Wiltshire, but it is not mentioned in the Domesday Survey of either county and Eyton claims that it must have been absorbed in the Wiltshire Manor of Stourton, which was held by Walsceline de Douai with a certain Radulfus as his under-tenant. Whether the Bonhams are descended from either of these has not been established, but it is a coincidence that the first of the name who appears in the *Pipe Roll* of Henry II for the years 1167 to 1171, just eighty-one years after the Survey, bears the same name as the overlord in Domesday and is styled Walkelinus de Bonham. I am not going to attempt a pedigree of these early Bonhams; materials are too scanty and most of the documents in which their names occur are undated, but in

1226/7 another Walkelinus de Bonham came to an agreement at Ilchester with his neighbour William de Sumery about the pasturing of his demesne oxen at Discove. This is probably the same Walkelinus who appears in the Bruton Cartulary as a witness to a document dating before the year 1236. The Augustinian Priory of Bruton was founded in 1126 by William de Bohun and the Bonhams were among its early benefactors, the name of Thomas de Bonham appearing in 1253. Walkelin de Bonham, Agnes his wife and Thomas his brother, William de Bonham and Walkeline his son, William de Bonham and Thomas his brother all appear in different undated entries in the Cartulary.

Somerset Feet of Fines, Somerset Record Soc., Vol. VI, p. 50.

Ibid., Vol. VIII, p. 10.

In 1229 permission was granted to William Bonham, described as one of the men of Guale, Prefect of Nantes, to cross the seas, *ad partes suas* with his men, horses and harness, due security being given. This entry is of some importance, as it seems to indicate that the family were of Norman origin and still had interests in France. Gualo, Prefect of Nantes, was the famous Papal Legate who crowned Henry III at Gloucester in 1216 and whose overbearing conduct was largely responsible for the opposition of the Barons to the growing power of the Church.

Close Rolls, 1229.

In 1230, one Giles Bonham, who had come with his ship to Portsmouth to cross with the King (Henry III) for his campaign in Poitou, was given permission to return home with his ship, as the King was already sufficiently provided with ships. Giles must already have cut loose from the family home, for it is difficult to suppose that any resident at such an inland spot as Bonham could have been called upon to supply a sea-going ship. The entry is interesting, however, as it shows an early Bonham as a shipowner, a profession in which later Bonhams figured largely.

Patent Rolls, 1230.

But these early Bonhams are only a flicker of names: Walkelinus with his demesne oxen, William with his men, horses and harness crossing the sea in the wake of the hated Papal Legate, Giles and his unwanted ship are like the tiny miniatures in the border of a mediaeval manuscript, pleasant to look at, but not helping much to an understanding of the text. It is only when the Bonhams flit to Great Wishford that they become more coherent and that we get a chance of drawing up some sort of pedigree.

CHAPTER II

GREAT WISHFORD

THE lot of the Bonham family certainly fell in pleasant grounds, for Great Wishford in its way is as beautiful as Bonham. It lies in the Wylde valley, a little above Wilton. For a background it has the great sweep of the Downs up to the ancient forest of Groveley; the village, with its square-towered church and ancient thatched farms and cottages, lies on rising ground and in the foreground is an ancient bridge spanning the Wylde, famed among chalk streams. Seen from this bridge on a fine summer evening, it is as lovely a bit of purely English scenery as one could wish to dream of. One sits on the parapet of the bridge and watches the long strands of weed swaying sleepily below the clear water and the tall reeds quivering in their eternal struggle with the current, and from time to time one's joy is made perfect by the rise of a fat and expensive trout, the property of the famous fishing club that has its headquarters here. There is nothing startling about the beauty of the place, but it is all intensely English and breathes that loveliness of ancient peace and well-being that only England at its best can give. This was the setting in which the 'auncienter house' of the Bonhams established themselves for something over 300 years. Their manor house has long since disappeared and the only traces of it are a few humps in a rough grass field, but there is still a Bonham Bridge over the Wylde and some notable Bonham tombs in the church.

Great Wishford was held at the time of the Domesday Survey by William Corniole as one of the King's Officers, but the Manor was then of small extent and the greater part of the parish was probably included in the King's forest of Groveley.

There is in the British Museum a collection of documents which seem at one time to have been in the hands of the Grobham family, who acquired the Manor from the Bonhams at the end of the sixteenth century, and these, together with documents from the Record Office and elsewhere, enable us

CHART I

Henry I granted the whole of the Manor of Great Wishford to:—

PATRICK DE CADURCIS (CHAWORTH, CHAWRCIS).

CICELY DE CADURCIS = HENRY DE ALBINACO (DAUBENEY)
 (held the Manor in 1242; *Testa de Nevill*).

ROBERT DAUBENEY gave the manor to his younger brother NIGEL DAUBENEY.

WILLIAM DAUBENEY.

HENRY DAUBENEY.

HUGH DAUBENEY,
Lord and Rector of
Gt. Wishford,
d. childless.

WALTER DAUBENEY,
Lord and Rector of
Gt. Wishford,
d. childless.

HENRY DAUBENEY,
Lord of Gt. Wishford,
d. childless in 1278.

JULIANA DAUBENEY, = ——— DE BONHAM,
d. before 1278. | d. before 1278.

WILLIAM DE BONHAM,
d. before 1278.

MAURICE DE BONHAM,
inherited half of the manor
on the death of his grand-uncle
HENRY DAUBENEY in 1278,
when he was aged 'at least 25'.
(For continuation see Bonham
pedigree chart.)

CLARICIA DAUBENEY = ATTE FORD,

aged 35 in 1278 when she inherited half of the Manor on the death of her brother Henry. She married (2) EDMUND DE SPIGURNEL.

ADAM ATTE FORD.

ADAM ATTE FORD.

to put together a fairly complete account of the later history of the Manor.

Br. Mus. Add. Ch.
15,125.

By the reign of Henry I it was in the hands of the King, for this sovereign granted it to Patrick de Cadurcis (Chaworth, Chawrcis), with every sort of feudal privilege such as the King himself had exercised when he held it in his own hands. The family of de Cadurcis or Chaworth was of great consequence in the West Country. One of its members, Sibilla, married Walter d'Evreux, son of the great Edward, Earl of Salisbury, founder of Bradenstoke Priory. This Sibilla Chaworth was great-grandmother of the famous Ela of Salisbury, foundress of Lacock Abbey. Patrick Chaworth married one of his daughters, Cicely, to Henry de Albinaco (Daubeney) and gave with her in marriage the Manor of Great Wishford.

Br. Mus. Add. Ch.
15,084.

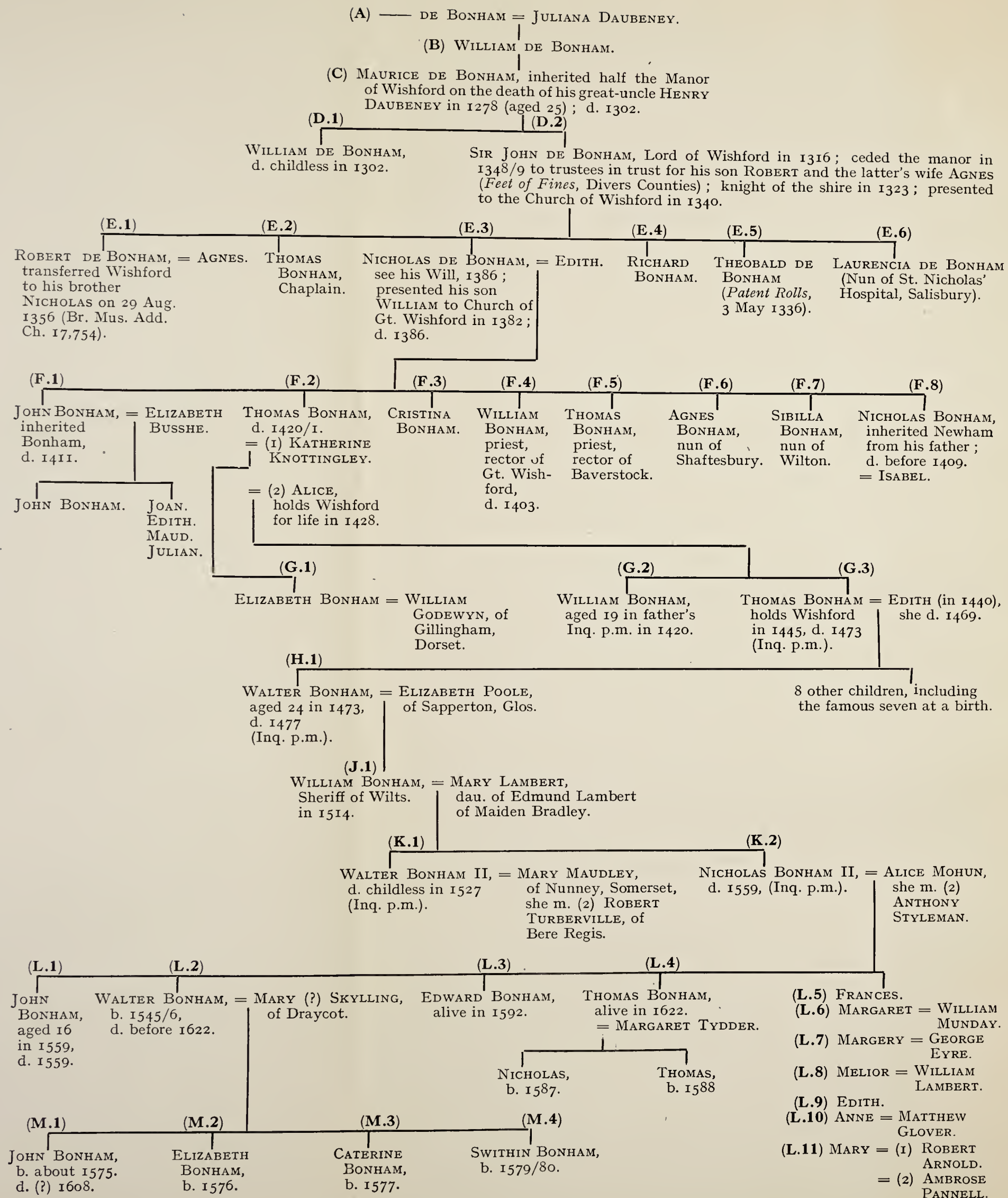
The history of the Manor during the Daubeney régime is fully set out in two interesting documents in the British Museum. From these we learn that it passed through the hands of no fewer than eight members of the family in a period of not much more than 100 years. We also learn, which is important, that there was another Manor in Wishford called 'Ffanacurt' and that the Daubeneyes successfully contested a claim that their tenants owed suit to the Court of that Manor.

The last of the Daubeneyes of Great Wishford was another Henry, who died childless in 1278. His two elder brothers who had in turn held the Manor, were both priests and rectors of Wishford and died before him; but he had two sisters, Juliana and Claricia. Juliana had married a Bonham, whose name I have not been able to discover, but he owned the Manor of Bonham, for that Manor passed to his descendants. With this Bonham the true pedigree of the Wishford branch begins and I have made him (A) in that pedigree. They had a son named William (B), and William in his turn had a son named Maurice (C). At the date of Henry Daubeney's death in 1278, his sister Juliana and her Bonham husband and their son William de Bonham were all dead and his grand-nephew Maurice de Bonham (then aged 'at least 25') was declared to be one of his heirs. The other heir was Henry's younger sister Claricia,¹ wife

¹ A. T. Everitt states that in an Assize Roll 'dated Pasch. 1280' Claricia is called the wife of Edmundus de Espigurnell, who died childless in 1296, and that she then married de la Ford (or Atte Ford).

Claricia was thirty-five when her brother died in 1278 and would thus have been fifty-three if she married Atte Ford on the death of

CHART II



of — Atte Forde, who was still alive and aged only thirty-five. The difference in ages between the two sisters must have been great, for the elder became a grandmother when the younger was only ten. So the Manor of Wishford was now divided into two halves, one of them in the hands of the Bonhams and the other in those of the Atte Fordes. Henry Daubeney had also owned property in Wiltshire at Berwick St. James, Orcheston St. George, Madinton and Wodebore and the Manor of Hale in Co. Southampton. The Bonhams certainly inherited a part of the other Wiltshire property and they also had a share in the Manor of Hale, so that the Hampshire branch of the Bonham family may have originated there, but I have not attempted to trace the history of the Hampshire branch.

Although the respective shares of the Bonhams and Atte Fordes in Great Wishford are always described as halves, there was certainly a third property there which at a very early date went to the Convent of Maiden Bradley and was held by that Convent till the dissolution of the monasteries. May not this possibly have been the Manor of Ffanacurt referred to in the Charter of Henry III to Walter Daubeney in 1267/8? The Priory of Maiden Bradley was founded c. 1154 by Manasseh Bisset as a home for lepers, he having a leprous daughter, and it is probable that the Priory acquired the Wishford property from the Daubeney, or perhaps even from Patrick de Chaworth.

(C) *Maurice de Bonham*. He died in 1302, aged fifty-nine (P.R.O. *Fine Rolls*, 1302).

(D.1) *William de Bonham*, eldest son of Maurice de Bonham (C). Died without issue in 1302, when he was in possession of the property.

(D.2) *Sir John de Bonham*, second son of Maurice de Bonham (C), was in possession of half the Manor of Great Wishford in 1316 when Adam atte Ford (grandson of Claricia Daubeney) was in possession of the other half. The Lords of the two halves of the Manor presented alternately to the

P.R.O. *Reg. and
assess. relating to
Feudal Aids*, 1316.

her first husband. As she had a son and heir by Atte Ford this seems improbable.

That she did marry Edmund de Espigurnell (or Spigurnel) is confirmed by various Inquests p.m. of the Quentyn family in 1280, 1284 and 1289 (*Calendar of Inq. p.m.*) when they held land in Great Wishford of Edmund de Spigurnel and Maurice de Bonham jointly.

I think Everitt has inverted the order of the marriages and that at the date of her brother's death in 1278 Claricia, aged thirty-five, was already the wife, or perhaps even the widow, of — Atte Ford and the mother of his son Adam, and that she married Spigurnel as her second husband in or before 1280.

Institutions in Wishford Magna. MS. in Church. Hoare's *Modern Wiltshire*, II, p. 45.

Cal. of Inq. p.m. in Br. Mus., Vol. VI, p. 143, and P.R.O. *Fine Rolls*, 1344.

P.R.O. *Feet of Fines*, Divers counties, 21-24, Vol. III, 287/43, No. 432.

Patent Rolls, 1336.

living of the Parish and in 1340, John de Bonham, who is here styled 'Miles', presented Thomas Anthony de Wychford. In 1323 Sir John de Bonham, knight, was one of the knights of the shire.

In 1320 he held one-sixteenth of a knight's fee of Wm. de Montecute in Discove, the place, it will be remembered, where his ancestor, Walkeline, had come to an arrangement with his neighbour for the pasturage of his demesne cattle nearly a century before.

We know that he also held the old family property at Bonham, for in a final concord made in 1337 at York, and confirmed in 1348 at Westminster, he handed over all his property to trustees for the benefit of his son, Robert (E.1), and that son's wife, Agnes. The property included the Manor of Bonham and land in Berwick, Bruton, Wincanton and Staverdale in Co. Somerset, and half the Manor of Great Wishford and lands in Berwick St. James and Orcheston St. George in Co. Wilts.

Why and when Sir John Bonham was knighted has not been discovered, but the fact that he made over his property to his son in 1337 at York, may perhaps indicate that he was a soldier in the Scottish war.

The only other titbit of information that I have gleaned about Sir John is that in 1336, he and his sons, Robert (E.1) and Theobald (E.5) and others were accused, by one William Quyntyn, of assaulting him at Great Wishford, an affray which seems to have arisen in consequence of certain trespasses committed by the Bonhams. This is the first that we hear of the Quyntyn family at Great Wishford. They certainly owned property there, probably for service in the Royal Forest of Groveley, for they held by Serjeanty.

In the Harleian Miscellany in the British Museum (2082 d., p. 437), there is a curious poem entitled 'The Nine Worthies of London', written by Richard Johnson and dated 1592, giving the stories of various eminent City of London personages. Each worthy recites his own tale and among them is 'Sir John Bonham, mercer, in the time of Edward the First'.

The poem was probably composed for some City Masque or show and is sad doggerel, but with here and there a flash of the true Elizabethan quality. This 'worthy' cannot be surely identified with this Sir John Bonham of Wishford; he states, indeed, in the poem, that he came from Devonshire, but I have never found any trace of any Bonhams in that county. Our Sir John, however, was certainly knighted by someone for some feat of arms and date and name are

near enough to make the association possible and so I do not hesitate to reproduce this amusing work here :

SIR JOHN BONHAM, KNIGHT

Let them that pull their quils from griffons wings
And dip them in the bloud of Pagan's bane ;
Let them describe me from the brest that sings,
A poem of bloudie showers of raigne :
And in my tale, a mournefull eleagie,
To such as do the lawes of God denie.

A gentleman I am of gentle blood,
A knight my father was, yet thought no scorne
To place his sonne within a prentise hood ;
For Nature will appeare as she was borne :
A Devonshire man, to London loe ! I came
To learn to traffique of a marchant-man.

Shortelie from thence to Denmarke was I bound,
Well shipt with ware my master gave in charge ;
I deemd the water better than the ground,
And on the seas a man might see at large :
Me thought that Fortune there might flie her fill,
And pitch and light upon what place she will.

Ariv'd at last, in Denmarke was I sett,
Where Bonham did demeane himself so well
That, though some strangers there had pitcht a nett
To catch my feete, themselves therein soone fell :
And such dishonour dropt upon their head,
As they their native countrie quicklie fled.

My wortlesse fame unto the king was brought,
Who shew'd himselfe both milde and debonare ;
A cause of gracious kindnesse still he soughte
And for my countrey did commend my care :
And, (though I say it, that might better cease)
Bonham did purchase fame and love's encrease.

A virtuous ladie, and a curteous prince
This famous king unto his daughter had ;
Hir countenance did the baser sort convince,
Yet did she bare her gently to bad :
Such was her beautie, such was her grace and favour,
That watchful Envy no way could deprave her.

Excepting still the praise of Procerpine,
I may a little glance upon her grace ;
The words she spake did ever seem divine,
And Nature chose her altars in her face :
Where in the day her golden flames do burne,
And they that gaze shall frie, except they turne.

Their bodies once consum'd, Love tooke their soules,
 And there satte binding them within her haire,
 She neede not frowne, her smoothest lookes controles,
 See how shee stayes, yet doth the guiltlesse spare :
 Guiltlesse they are that dare not stay so long,
 To hear the musick of inchaunting song.

Should I but speake the words unto her face,
 Perhaps, you would suppose I flatter her ;
 If so, I have too long upheld the chace,
 And negligently spar'd the pricking spurre ;
 In whose sweet praise I end, not yet begunne,
 Because my lame concept wants feete to runne.

Who will not judge, the bravest Denmarke knights
 Will cracke their lances in her proude defence ?
 And now by this a troope of worthie wights
 Prepared justes, her beauty to incence ;
 And unto me, unworthie me, she gave
 A favour, to adorne my courage brave.

I know your jelousie will judge me nowe,
 And say I prais'd her for her favour's sake ;
 Alas ! he lookes not up, is bound to bowe ;
 A cedar never springeth from a brake :
 It pleas'd her well, age not displeased mee,
 Why then should Envy still with honour bee ?

They that have guiders cannot chuse but runne,
 Their mistresse' eye doe learne them chivalrie ;
 With those commaunds these turneys are begunne,
 And shiver'd launces in the ayre do flie :
 No more but this, there Bonham had the best,
 Yet list I not to vaunt how I was blest.

Each knight had favour bound to his desert,
 And everie ladye lent her love a smile ;
 There boldly did I not myselfe insert,
 Nor secret practise did my pride compile.
 But of herself the gentle princesse gave
 Rewarde of honour unto me her slave.

In fine, my master's shippe with goods were fraught,
 And I desirous to retorne agayne ;
 For all the favours that my Fortune wrought
 Unto my master's businesse was no mayne :
 But so occasion, trusty friend to time,
 Prepar'd me steps and made me waye to clime.

Great Solimon, the Turkish Emperor,
 Made sodaine warres against the Danish king ;
 And most unlike a noble Emperour,
 Did spoyle and ruine to his confines bring :
 A thing unlike, yet truth to witnesse call,
 And you shall finde he made mee generall.

A puissant armie then was levied straight,
And skilful pilats sent to guide my ship :
Imagin but a Christian's deadly hate
Against the heathen that our blood doth sip ;
Then thinke how Bonham, bent against the Turke
Wrought wonders by the high Almighty's worke.

Halfe of his armie, smouldred with the dust,
Lay slaughtered on the earth in gorie blood ;
And he himself compell'd to quell his lust,
By composition, for his people's good :
Then, at a parlie, he admirde me so,
He made me knight, and let his armie go.

He gave me costly robes and chaines of golde,
And, girded with his gallies, sent me backe ;
For Fame, unto the Danish King, had tolde
My gotten glorie, and the Turkish wracke ;
He gave me gifts, in guerdon of my fight,
And sent me unto England like a knight.

How was I welcom'd then, 'twere vaine to tell ;
For, shortly after, life had runne his race,
And hither was I summoned to dwell,
My other fellow-worthies to embrace :
Thus gently borne, a marchant by my trade,
And in the field Bonham a knight was made.

CHAPTER III

A FOURTEENTH-CENTURY SQUIRE

P.R.O. *Patent Rolls*,
1348.

(E.1) ROBERT DE BONHAM succeeded his father Sir John. The Bonhams seem to have indulged in the popular mediaeval sport of raiding, for in 1348 John, Archbishop of Canterbury, Elizabeth de Monte Acuto and Edward de Monte Acuto accused Thomas Bonham, Chaplain (E.2), and Nicholas his brother (E.3) of breaking their Closes at Norton Skydemoor, Billeye, Trove and Enwell in County Wilts. and driving away 20 oxen, 40 bullocks, 100 swine and 400 sheep worth £400, felling their trees there, moving their crops and carrying away their trees and crops.

Thomas and Nicholas were brothers of Robert de Bonham. John, Archbishop of Canterbury, was the famous John de Stratford, Chancellor of England, who died in that same year. What interests the Montacutes had at Norton Scudamore (now Norton Bavent) I do not know, nor what the trouble with the Bonhams was about, but Norton Scudamore was near Sutton Veny, where later Bonhams certainly owned property.

In 1349 the Bonhams were flying at higher game than oxen and pigs, for in that year Robert himself and his brother Nicholas (E.3), together with Robert de Burton, parson of Bromham, William Wichampton, Robert Russel, Robert son of Walter Turne, Alexander Ace, William Ace, John Ace and others were accused by Humphry de Bohun, Earl of Hereford and Essex, of abducting at Trowbridge Alice, daughter and heir of John Greville, a minor in his custody, whose marriage belonged to him, and of carrying away his goods and assaulting his men and servants, whereby he lost their service for a great time.

It would be interesting to know the inwardness and outcome of this incident, for Alice Greville (or Greynville) was the heiress of Southwick, near Trowbridge; the old moated manor house still stands and is now a farm. Alice eventually married (before 1365), as his first wife, Sir Humphrey Stafford, and brought him the Manor of Southwick.

The occurrence of the name of John Ace among the accused is curious, for the father of William of Wykeham, who was now twenty-five years of age and had entered the King's service two years before, was John Ace, and the name, so far as I know, is not a common one.

In 1351 Robert handed over to one Robert of Wishford, priest, and his heirs all the lands and tenements which the latter occupied in Great Wishford. The significance of this is not apparent, but as Robert was a priest he was perhaps only making him a trustee of the property, for in the following year, 1352, he settled by fine on his brother Nicholas (E.3) his half of the Manor of Great Wishford. He, Robert, was to enjoy it for life, paying to Nicholas a yearly rent of a rose and on his death the property was to go absolutely to Nicholas.

Br. Mus. Add. Ch.
15,081.

P.R.O. *Feet of Fines*,
Wilts., 24, 28 Ed. III
No. 20.

Robert's charter to Robert of Wishford is of special interest, for to it is attached the first specimen of the Bonham Seal that I have come across, in black wax, with the Bonham arms as used to-day.

But the transaction was not even now complete, for on 29 August 1356, Robert granted by charter to Nicholas in absolute possession not only his half of the Manor of Great Wishford, but the whole of his Manor of Bonham. This charter was given to the British Museum by Admiral Bonham (1762-1855). It was granted at Salisbury (New Sarum) and is witnessed by several important people, including Thomas de Hungerford, sheriff of Wiltshire, and Walter atte Borgh. In the charter itself Robert de Bonham says that he is acting in accordance with the Indenture lately made between himself and this Walter atte Borgh. In none of these documents does Robert give any reason for the transfer of the property to his brother, nor is the name of his wife Agnes mentioned, though the property had been settled on both of them. Agnes was probably dead and Robert may have contemplated retirement to a monastery, a practice then almost as fashionable as that of raiding one's neighbours.

Br. Mus. Add. Ch.
17,754.

(E.3) *Nicholas de Bonham I.* We know more of Nicholas than of any of his predecessors. His share in the raiding of the Archbishop's land and in the abduction of the heiress Alice Greville were perhaps youthful indiscretions, for his later records show him as a pattern of law and order. He was the first of the family, so far as we know, to interest himself in public affairs and he seems to have been an early example of the perfect English squire.

He was probably settled at Great Wishford before its final

P.R.O. *Fine Rolls*,
1354.

cession to him, for in 1354 he was granted the wardship of two parts of the lands of Great Wishford and a bailiwick of keeping a moiety of the King's Forest of Groveley which had belonged to William Quyntyn, pending the coming of age of the latter's son, Richard. This was doubtless that same William Quyntyn, who, as already mentioned, had accused Nicholas's father, Sir John de Bonham, of assaulting him at Great Wishford. Nicholas held these lands until Richard Quyntyn came of age in 1373.

Inq. p.m., 1373.

P.R.O. *Descriptive
Catalogue of Ancient
Deeds*, 1364.

In 1364 he was steward of the borough of Wilton and in the following year he and others were granted licences for the alienation in mortmain to the Abbess of Wilton of lands in Chilmark and Foffunte for the purpose of keeping torches burning for ever before the altars in the Abbey Church.

The catalogue of the offices which he held and the various functions that he was called upon to perform makes dull enough reading, but gives an important picture of the activities of a conscientious county gentleman of the time.

P.R.O. *Fine Rolls*,
1366.

In 1366 (with Robert de la Mare) and again in 1372, 1373, 1376, 1377, 1380 and 1383 he was a knight of the shire and the Sheriff was authorized to pay his expenses for 14 days for coming to the Parliament at Westminster. In 1386 both he and his son Thomas were appointed Justices of the Peace for Wiltshire.

P.R.O. *Patent Rolls*.

He was appointed to serve on numerous Commissions :

In 1375—to investigate the evasion of the duties on cloth.

In 1377 and 1388 on the Commission of the Peace for the county of Wiltshire.

In 1382, with Ralph, Bishop of Salisbury, the Abbot of Malmesbury, the Earl of Salisbury, etc., one of the Commissioners of Array.

In 1385, on a commission 'in view of the imminent invasion of the French'.

P.R.O. *Fine Rolls*,
1377.

Small wonder that in 1377 he was relieved of his office of coroner on the score that he was too much occupied with the King's business to attend to his coroner's duties.

P.R.O. *Patent Rolls*.

Then he was entrusted with other tasks which throw an interesting sidelight on the history of the times. In 1381, the year of Wat Tyler's revolt and the peasants' rebellion, the troubles had evidently reached the West Country, for in that year he is commissioned, with Robert Bealknap, Thomas Hungerford, John de la Mare and John Upton, to inquire into a complaint by the mayor and community of Salisbury 'that certain evildoers came to the city by night, set guards at divers places and entrances, so that they could

not go out, broke a great portion of a trench that they had begun to make for the protection of the city and assaulted them'. The city fathers had evidently suffered something in the nature of a siege at the hands of the rebels. Lollardry was largely responsible for the rebellion and one suspects that the orders sent to Nicholas Bonham in the same year 'to arrest and hand over to the Prioress of Amesbury her confrater, Robert Warmenstre, called Bottenham, an apostate friar of the Augustinian order, who, in secular habit was wandering from place to place', was not unconnected with the doings of the sect.

In 1383 Nicholas Bonham and Hugh Cheyne were entrusted with work of quite a different character and were to survey the works to be carried out at the castle of Old Sarum by Arnold Brocas, clerk of the works. Funds for the purpose were provided by the sale of the goods of Nicholas Wodehulle of New Sarum and Philip Soydown of Weymouth, outlawed at the suit of William Canynges of Bristol for debt.

Nicholas was also a verderer of Groveley Forest.

Fine Rolls, 1386.

These records bear witness to a full and useful life, but we get a much more intimate picture of Nicholas de Bonham from his will, which is preserved in the British Museum.

He commends his soul to God and his body to be buried 'in the Church of St. Giles (Egidius) at Great Wishford before the Altar of the Blessed Mary in the northern part of the Church'.

Br. Mus. Add. Ch.
15,174.

He then goes on to make various religious bequests; the Bonhams were evidently pious folk and these are both numerous and generous:

To the Church of the Blessed Mary of Sarum [the Cathedral] 13s. 4d.

To the Church of Christ [possibly Christchurch Priory, Hampshire, but more probably some local church] 40d.

To the Church of Great Wishford, a great book called a Portiforium, to the use of the Divine Service, to the honour of God and the Glorious Virgin Mary as well as of the Confessor St. Giles in perpetuity [temporibus perpetuis duraturum].

To each of the following lights in the Church of Great Wishford four bushels of wheat and four of barley:—The Holy Cross, the Blessed Mary, the Blessed Nicholas and St. John.

To the fabric of the Church of Berwick St. James 8 bushels of wheat and 8 of barley and 2 sheep from my stock [stauro] there of the value of 18d. each.

To the fabric of the Church of Storton [Stourton] a

cow of the value of 6s. 8*d.* and 2 sheep of the value of 18*d.* each, from my stock at Bonham.

To the fabric of the Church of Fennysutton [Sutton Veny] 8 bushels of wheat and 8 of barley.

To the fabric of the Church of Sts. Peter and Paul at Heightredebury [Heytesbury] 10s.

To the Lady Matilda, Abbess of Wilton, a cup of silver with a gilt cover and a cup [ciphum] called a Note.¹

To each nun of the Abbey of Wilton, 12*d.*, to pray for my soul and for the souls of my parents and benefactors.

To the brethren of the Order of Preachers of New Sarum, and to the brethren of the Order of the Minors of New Sarum, 13s. 4*d.* each, to pray for my soul and for the souls of my parents and benefactors.

To Sir John Adam, Chaplain, 13s. 4*d.*

To Sir Thomas Condell, Chaplain, 6s. 8*d.*

To Sir John Grene, Chaplain, 20s.

To Sir Thomas, Chaplain, 13s. 4*d.*

This completes the religious bequests. In the will itself the bequests to the Orders of Friars in Salisbury and to the four chaplains come later, after the family and before the servants, but I have grouped them here together for the sake of convenience. One or two points in these bequests seem worthy of note. The four lights in the church of Great Wishford, each presumably before an altar, seem to be a liberal allowance for so small a church; they include the light of the Blessed Mary, before whose altar it will be remembered the testator was to be buried. The benefactions to the churches of Great Wishford, Berwick St. James, Stourton and Sutton Veny were doubtless due to the fact that Nicholas owned property in all these places, but the reason for the bequest to Heytesbury is not so clear, though it may perhaps be accounted for by the nearness of Heytesbury to his Sutton Veny property.

The Abbess of Wilton, who gets two cups, was Matilda de Bokeland.

Having done his duty towards the Church, Nicholas next provides for his own family.

John, his eldest son, was evidently to have the Bonham property, for he leaves to him his farm stock and implements there. These consisted of:

8 oxen of the value of 10s. each.

3 cows of the value of 6s. 8*d.* each.

1 sow of the value of 20*d.*

6 hoglets [hoggettes porcinos] of the value of 2s. each.

20 sheep of the value of 18*d.* each.

¹ Canon E. H. Goddard suggests that this was a cocoa-nut cup.

20 breeding ewes (oves matrices) of the value of 12*d.* each.

A wagon [carectam] bound with iron with all its furnishings [cum toto apparatu].

3 mares [jumenta] with their collars and traces [cum colaribus et tractubus] and all things necessary to the aforesaid wagon.

1 plough [carucam] with its ironwork [ferramentis], yokes, chains, and all its furnishings.

2 harrows [hercias] with iron teeth [ferro dentatas] with all their furnishings.

John is also to have a bowl with a silver cover marked with the letters T.B. But

if it should happen that John Bonham, my son, should disturb, aggravate, or in any way molest Edith, my wife, or our male heirs of the Manor of Wishford, then all the goods and chattels bequeathed above to the aforesaid John shall remain to Edith, my wife, and Thomas and William Bonham, my sons.

John duly inherited the Manor of Bonham, but it came back in the next generation to the son of Thomas, who inherited Wishford.

The enumeration of the farm implements at Bonham is interesting. We are accustomed to think that at such an early date farm wagons, ploughs and harrows were of the rudest and most primitive description. The iron fittings were valuable enough to merit special mention, but it is something of a surprise to learn that they existed at all in the fourteenth century.

The will goes on :

To Cristina, my daughter, a bowl with a cover of silver marked with the letters W.B.

To Master William Bonham, my son, Rector of the Church of Great Wishford, my best missal, my best psalter and a mass book with music [librum gradale].

To Nicholas Bonham, my son, a bowl with a cover of silver marked with a red rose [rosa blodea] and the letters N.B.

To Sir [Dom.] Thomas Bonham, rector of the Church of Babestoke [Baverstock] 2 oxen and 2 cows at the disposal of my executors, and 20*s.*

To Agnes, my daughter, nun of Shaftesbury, a bowl with a cover of silver marked A.R. and in the same bowl is an image of St. Katherine ; a brass pot [ollam eneam], a platter [patellam] a jug and bason [pelvim cum lavatorio], a pewter charger [unum charger de peutre], six dishes, six plates [discos] and six salts of pewter, at the disposal of my executors.

To Sibilla, my daughter, nun of Wilton, a small bowl with cover of silver, and three silver spoons [coclearia] marked with the letters J.B., a gold ring, a gold brooch [fermaculum] with an inscription in red letters [scriptum litteris blodeis], a ' Godard ' ¹ of silver gilt and a ' Euere ' of silver with two spouts [guttis]. To the same Sibilla, after the death of Edith, my wife, a pair of plates [unum par de platys] of silver and blue [argenti et azuri] on which are depicted on one side the Crucifixion of Our Lord, Mary and John—and on the other side three images [ymagines] of the Blessed Mary, St. Katherine and St. Margaret, a table cloth [mappam mensale] with a napkin [tuell], a jug and basin, a brass pot, a platter, a pewter charger, six dishes, six plates and six salts of pewter and a coffer, at the disposal of my executors.

To Laurencia, my sister, 20s.

To Alice Baretours [?] a piece [peciam] of silver with a cover marked with the letters A.B.

In this list of family bequests Nicholas mentions four sons and three daughters ; two of these sons were priests and two of the daughters nuns. William held the family living of Great Wishford which had been given to him by his father in 1382, and Sir Thomas was rector of Baverstoke ; and his name occurs in the *Patent Rolls* in that capacity more than once and as late as the year 1401.

To the names of the two daughters in religion, Agnes of Shaftesbury and Sibilla of Wilton, we can, I think, safely add that of the sister Laurencia to whom Nicholas left 20s., for in 1361 Laurencia Bonham was instituted by Bishop Wyvill to St. Nicholas's Hospital at Salisbury.

Wilts. A.M., Vol. 25,
p. 126.

The large proportion of priests and nuns witnesses to the piety of the family.

The lay members were John, Cristina (of whom nothing more is known), Nicholas and a second son of the name of Thomas, who is mentioned later as one of the executors of the will. He inherited Great Wishford on the death of his mother, to whom it seems to have been left for life. The will only disposes of personal property and it will be noticed that no legacies are left either to the widow or to their son Thomas, who is not even mentioned in the body of the will. The presumption is that all the stock and chattels at Great Wishford were entailed or assured to them by some separate arrangement. If, as I think we may quite fairly assume, the inheritance of the widow and her son Thomas at Wishford

¹ A goblet. Canon Goddard informs me that the tradition of keeping a ' Goddard ' or goblet as a family heirloom survives in his family to this day.

included some silver plate, the quantity of that commodity bequeathed in the will is rather unexpected evidence of the comparative luxury of a household of this status at that period. There are no fewer than 6 bowls with silver covers, 2 silver cups, a silver 'Godard' and ewer, two silver enamel plates, three silver spoons, a gold ring and a gold enamel brooch. The thought of what any of these things, if they had survived, would be worth to-day makes one's mouth water. The three fourteenth-century silver spoons alone, if sold at Christie's, would fetch a small fortune, while the 'godard' and ewer, the bowl with the image of St. Katherine, the silver and azure plates with the Crucifixion on one side and images of saints on the other would be worth a king's ransom.

I have not discovered the maiden name of Edith, the testator's widow, who inherited Great Wishford for her life. Her son and successor, Thomas, followed in his father's footsteps as a county magnate, was prominent in all local affairs, and was High Sheriff of Wiltshire in 1395 and 1410.

Alice Baretours (?), who got a piece of silver plate under the will, has not been identified, but from the place in that document in which her name occurs it seems probable that she was a near relation.

The last section of the will is taken up with bequests to servants and other dependents.

To Alice, the daughter of Thomas Gosselyn, my servant, 3 cows from my stock at Bynlegh [not identified] of the value of 6s. 8*d.* each, 12 sheep of the value of 18*d.* each, 12 breeding ewes of the value of 12*d.* each, 3 quarters of wheat and 3 of barley, a jug and basin, a brass pot, a platter of masselyn and a cauldron [cacabum], and a bed. The cattle were to be at Alice's own selection.

To Edward Cnouke, my clerk [clerico meo], woollen cloth for a new robe and a young bullock and a cow from my stock at Bonham.

To Robert Leverich, my clerk, 20s., one of my best robes and a chestnut [rubrum] horse called 'Le Rede Colt'.

To Philip, my servant, my second best robe and 10s., a cow of the value of 8s., 2 sheep of the value of 18*d.* each and 2 breeding ewes of the value of 12*d.* each.

To Cristina Stede of Sherreneton [Sherrington] a cow.

To John Brigge, my bailiff [ballivo], at Bonham, a cow of the value of half a mark, 2 sheep and 2 breeding ewes, 4 bushels of rye [selignis] and 4 bushels of barley.

To John Conk, my shepherd [opilioni] at Bonham, a young bullock, a sheep, a breeding ewe, 4 bushels of wheat and 4 bushels of barley.

To every other of my servants at Bonham, 2 bushels of wheat, 2 bushels of barley and 12*d.*, to be paid at the Feast of St. Michael next to come after my death.

To John Gildecher, my bailiff at Nywenham [Newham near Sutton Veny] a cow of the value of half a mark, 4 bushels of wheat and 4 bushels of barley.

To every other of my servants at Nywenham, 2 bushels of wheat and 2 bushels of barley.

To John Grey, my servant at Berwick St. James, 4 bushels of wheat and 4 bushels of barley.

To John Fisherton, my bailiff at Wishford, a robe.

To every other of my servants at Wishford, 2 bushels of wheat and 2 bushels of barley.

For the good and faithful execution of this my present will I order, make and constitute as my executors the worshipful [venerabiles] and discreet Lords John de Waltham and John Chitterne, clerks, John Bonham, Thomas Bonham, William Bonham and Sir Thomas Bonham, pastor of the Church of Babestoke, my sons, and Robert Leverich, that they may deal with my goods as bequeathed above and especially may dispose of them for the welfare of my soul, as will seem to them opportune.

In testimony whereof I have set my seal to this will at Great Wishford on the day and year above stated.

The bequests to servants, apart from their generous scale and the fact that no one seems to have been forgotten, call for little comment. It will be noticed that Nicholas employed two personal 'clerks'; they were probably minor clergy, but their functions perhaps approximated to those which we associate to-day with the use of the word. One of them, Robert Leverich, was one of the executors of the will and his name is found in other Bonham family documents down to the year 1400. It may well have been one of these 'clerks' who drew up his employer's will; whoever did so well deserved a handsome bequest, for it is an admirable piece of work.

The executors of the will merit a little more attention. With the exception of the two laymen sons, John and Thomas Bonham, they are all clergy. (Incidentally, it may be pointed out here that while Nicholas styles himself *de* Bonham, he always refers to the other members of his family by the simple surname without the 'de'.) The first executor, John de Waltham, was a great ecclesiastic who, two years later, in 1388, became Bishop of Salisbury, when Richard II was present in person at his consecration. In 1391 he was Lord Treasurer of England. He appears to have kept up his friendship with the Bonham family, for in

his will (1395) he left 10 marks to Thomas Bonham, the layman, his fellow executor. John de Waltham was so beloved of Richard II that that monarch caused him to be buried among the royal tombs in Westminster Abbey—the only instance, it is believed, of such an honour being accorded to one not of royal blood.

John Chitterne, the second executor named, was Archdeacon of Sarum.

Robert Leverich has already been mentioned above and the other executors were four of the testator's sons, the only son not nominated to act in that capacity being the testator's namesake, Nicholas. He was perhaps too young to be included.

It would be difficult, I think, to find a more shapely document than this will of Nicholas Bonham. He takes in turn his church, his family and his household, and deals with each in perfect order and with admirable clearness. It gives us a good picture of the arrangements of a country gentleman's household and farm in the fourteenth century, though it is curious that, with the exception of a coffer and a bed, no single article of furniture is mentioned. It would, perhaps, be too much to claim that the will reveals the character of its author, Nicholas Bonham, yet one does somehow get the impression of a pleasing personality, of a man of devout piety and yet of sound common sense, and of a country gentleman who knew every detail on his estates and farms and was a good master and kind friend to all his people.

CHAPTER IV

THE MANOR OF BONHAM IN THE EARLY FIFTEENTH CENTURY

I THINK there is some indication in the will that Nicholas Bonham had been twice married and that Edith was his second wife. The solemn warning addressed to his eldest son John that if he 'disturb, aggravate or in any way molest Edith my wife or our male heirs of the Manor of Wishford' his share of the property is to go to Edith and the testator's sons, Thomas and William, is so worded that Edith can surely not have been John's own mother. The fact that there were two sons of the name of Thomas perhaps also points to there having been two sets of children by different wives. I take it that John, the heir to Bonham, and Thomas, the parson of Baverstoke, were sons of an earlier marriage, while Thomas, the heir to Great Wishford, William, the parson of Great Wishford, and Nicholas were the sons of Edith, the testator's widow.

The example set by Nicholas of naming two of his sons Thomas was an unfortunate one from the point of view of the family historian, for the use of the name Thomas becomes a perfect passion with future generations of Bonhams and the multitude of Thomas Bonhams in every branch of the family causes much confusion and uncertainty.

P.R.O. *Fine Rolls*,
1386 and 1387.

The will, as was usual, disposed of only the personal property of the testator, but, as we should expect in the case of so orderly a person as Nicholas de Bonham, it was supplemented by charters, handing over his real property to a body of trustees consisting of John de Waltham, John de Chitterne, and his son Thomas Bonham, parson of Baverstock (three of the administrators of the will) and Sir Thos. Hungerford and John Goweyn. There were separate charters for the Wishford and Bonham properties, and these, in turn, were supplemented in the following year by quitclaims made by John Bonham, the eldest son and heir, to Edith Bonham, the testator's widow, in respect of the Manor of Wishford, and by Nicholas Bonham, the youngest son, to his eldest brother John, in respect of the lands at Berwick St. James.

So the Bonham lands, on the death of Nicholas I, were divided among three brothers or step-brothers: John (F.1), the eldest, got the Manor of Bonham and the property at Berwick St. James; Thomas Bonham (F.2), the layman, got the Bonham half of the Manor of Great Wishford, subject to a life interest by his mother, and Nicholas (F.8), the younger, got the property at Newham, Fenny Sutton and Crockerton.

Both the Bonham and Newham properties reverted in time to the Wishford branch of the family.

Of the other members of Nicholas I's generation little need be said:

(E.5) *Theobald de Bonham*. All we know of him is that he was a son of Sir John de Bonham (D.2) and took part in the brawl with the Quyntyn family in 1366 already mentioned.

(E.6) *Laurencia de Bonham* was instituted as a sister to St. Nicholas's Hospital, Salisbury, by Bishop Wyvill in 1361 and is mentioned in her brother Nicholas's will. *Phillips's Wiltshire Institutions.*

(GENERATION F)

(F.1) *John Bonham*, the heir to Bonham and Berwick St. James, was Commissioner of Array for Wiltshire with his brother Thomas in 1392, but he does not seem to have taken any great part in public life and his name is rarely found in contemporary records. *Patent Rolls, 1392.*

In 1402/3 he was in occupation of the Manor of Hanging Langford, on the Wylve above Wishford. He probably rented this property from his brother Thomas (F.2), to whom it had come by marriage (see later). We are told that in that year it had been 'resumed' into the King's hand 'in accordance with the petition of the Parliament at Westminster' as being the property of an alien Priory. (The overlordship, in fact, belonged to the Abbess of Wilton and how the Abbey could be classified as 'an alien Priory' seems to require some explanation.) It is worth noting that at that date the authority of Parliament was quoted to cover such royal acts of seizure. *P.R.O. Acts of the Privy Council, 1402/3.*

In 1401 John was renting land at Gaspore, near Bonham, from John de Clivedon of Nether Zeals. *W.A.M. Vol. 28 p. 208.*

We know little else about his activities, but fortunately his will is preserved at Somerset House and from it we learn something of his family.

The will is dated 14 March 1411, and was proved on 15 April of the same year. *P.P.C. Marche 23.*

He desires to be buried at Great Wishford and the rector

of Stourton (the parish church of Bonham) is to have 20s. for his burial.

The numerous pious bequests to the church, which were so striking a feature in his father's will, are not repeated in that of the son, but he leaves 100s. to be distributed to the poor on the day of his burial and to the fabric of the church of Great Wishford 40s., 'a standing crucifix of silver, to pray for the souls of my parents and benefactors, a "Paxbred" of silver in the keeping of Thomas my brother and a silver cup "swaged" to put the body of Our Lord Jhesus Christ in at Easter'.

He mentions a son John, who was apparently the only son, and four daughters, Joan, Edith, Maud and Julian.

His tenements in Bristol are to be sold by his executors and his tenements in Salisbury and the profits of land rented at Little Horningsham are to go to his son.

His daughter Joan is to have his tenements in Wilton and a silver cup with cover, seven silver spoons and one large cup.

His daughter Edith is to have a silver cup with cover and '50 of the best sheep in my fold at Sutton-super-la-Sonde' (? Sutton Veney).

His daughters Maud and Julian are each to have twenty sheep.

His sister Agnes (F.6) is to have a silver cup 'swaged'. This was the sister who was a nun at Shaftesbury, to whom her father, Nicholas, left silver plate and other gear in his will.

His brother Thomas is to have a silver pot, but it is in the keeping of William Webb for 5 marks and Thomas must acquire it to his own keeping : in other words, it was pledged and Thomas must pay to get it out of pawn.

Edward Shafton is to have a gold ring with a stone called an 'Everdeboys' (? a cameo) with a white horse.

William Stourton (probably Sir William Stourton who married Elizabeth Moyne and was father of the first Lord Stourton) was to have a gold ring, 'which I had of Elizabeth, his wife'.

The servants do not fare so well as in his father's will : Roger Houghs is to have a cow, a cloak and 20s ; Thomas Pudemor is to have 13s. 4d. and a cloak ; Joan Dygon is to have a cow ; and John Cory is to have 'my best sword'.

Elizabeth his wife was the chief beneficiary. She was to have 'all my stock, all the utensils in the kitchen and buttery and everything in the halls at Bonham and Berwick St. James'. Other bequests to her are two table napkins, two of the best towels of Paris work, two beds with curtains, two pairs of blankets, two pairs of sheets, etc., together with

a large quantity of silver plate, which will be dealt with presently.

The executors are the testator's brother, Thomas Bonham, John Cleymond and Thomas Bacon, rector of the church of Great Wishford. A note appended to the will states that the executors refused to serve and that the estate was administered on 24 April 1411, by the rector of Steeple Langford.

This refusal was doubtless due to a dispute which arose over the widow's share of the estate. She was Elizabeth, daughter of Ralph Busshe, and the dispute was over a sum of 40 marks due to the estate by her father in respect of her jointure. It led to a curious arrangement between the parties, the text of which is preserved in the British Museum (Add. Charter 15,301). It was signed at Shaftesbury and is in Norman French. The date, I think, is late for the use of that language and the French is decidedly of the 'Bowe' variety.

It enumerates much more clearly than the will itself the nature of the goods bequeathed to the widow, especially the large quantity of silver plate.

Attention was drawn to the unexpectedly large amount of plate left by John's father in 1386. John had inherited only one silver bowl and cover under that instrument, but by the date of his death in 1411 he possessed a very well-filled plate-chest.

The document is endorsed in a later hand :

Indenture of covenant between Thomas Bonham and John Cleymond, executors of John Bonham, of the one parte, and Elizabeth, which was the wyeff of the said John, of the other,—for the delivery of goods due by her joyneture.

This is the agreement made at Shaftesbury the Saturday next before the feast of St. Lawrence in the 12th year of Henry IV since the Conquest between Thomas Bonham and John Cleymond, executors of the will of John Bonham, of the one part, and Elizabeth, late the wife of the said John Bonham of the other part.—Witnesseth that the said Thomas and John, etc. have granted and given and promised to deliver to the said Elizabeth all the following goods :—firstly, a silver pot weighing 2 lbs. 3 ozs. 1 dwt. Troy (68s. 2d.)—a silver drinking cup with cover and griffin feet, weighing 4 lbs. 9 ozs. 1 dwt. (£6 13s. 0d.) also a wounde¹ drinking cup with silver gilt cover,

¹ Canon Goddard suggests that this may have been a cup with a 'wound' or twisted stem, or perhaps bowl or knop. Such cups were usually defined as 'wrythen'.

weighing 1 lb. 10 ozs. 1 dwt.—also a 'flat' silver drinking cup, weighing 2 lbs. 9 ozs.—also a round drinking cup and cover weighing $10\frac{1}{4}$ ozs. (23s. 11d.)—also 12 spoons, weighing 1 lb. $\frac{1}{4}$ oz. (28s. 7d.)—also a silver salt cellar weighing 1 lb. (28s.). Also a mazer weighing 1 lb. 3 ozs. (35s.)—also a mazer weighing 5 ozs. Also a silver chalice weighing 8 ozs. 1 dwt. (19s. 10d.) also a covered silver drinking cup weighing 10 marks (13s. 4d.).

Also, all the garnishings and necessities lying and belonging to the hall at Bonham and Berwick complete. Also all the garnishings and necessities lying and belonging to the kitchen, pantry, buttery and bakery. Also all the garnishings and necessities of the Larder, with the salted meats remaining there. Also, all manner of corn and hay of whatever sort growing and being on the lands and manor [mansion] of Bonham, Gayspore [Gasper, a hamlet near Bonham], Wincanton and Round Hill in the county of Somerset and at Berwick St. James and Uppington in the county of Wilts. Also, all the (?) timber (Mearenne) felled for building purposes in the aforesaid places. Also all wagons, ploughs and carts and implements for tilling the soil in the aforesaid places. Also, all the ploughs there being with all their fittings and belongings. Also, all the other livestock being in the aforesaid places. In addition to these, it is granted to the said Elizabeth that she shall have all the goods that were bequeathed to her by John Bonham, her late Baron, according to the purport of the will of the said John in that respect.

And moreover, the said Elizabeth on the Sunday before the Feast of St. Lawrence in the 12th year of Hen. IV after the Conquest, at Shaftesbury, did sell to the said Thomas and John Cleymond the elder all the following goods:— [Here follows a complete list of all the silver plate enumerated above.] On condition that if Ralph Busshe, father of the said Elizabeth pay or cause to be paid to the said Thomas and John Cleymond, etc. 40 marks which were due to the said John Bonham for the marriage of the said Elizabeth, at the Feast of all Saints next ensuing at Shaftesbury, then all the aforesaid goods sold to the said Thomas and John Cleymond will be restored to the said Elizabeth and Ralph or to their attorneys to hold to them and their executors for ever. And if the said Ralph fail in the payment of the aforesaid sum on the aforesaid day then the said Elizabeth wills and grants that the said Thomas and John Cleymond have and hold all the aforesaid goods sold to them and their executors for ever. In witness whereof the aforesaid parties have mutually set their seals to this Indenture.

Given, the year and place aforesaid.

The widow seems to have been in league with her late husband's executors to induce her father to pay up the balance of her jointure, but the means adopted do not sound very promising and whether they were effective we do not know.

The following is quoted as a specimen of the strange jargon in which this document is written :

Auxi touz les hostelmentz et necessariez gysauntz et appartenantz al panetrie et boterie en touz poyntz. . . . Auxi touz hostelmentz et necessariez de larder house appartenantz avec les chars sales remenauntz en ycelle. . . . Auxi tout le autre store vive estaunt en les lieuz avaunt ditz. Et outre ceux sont grauntez al dite Elizabeth quel avera touz lez bienz queux furent a luy demisz par John Bonham, jadis son Baron, selon cele que le testament de dit John Bonham en cele partie purporte.

From a study of the will and of this curious sequel to it I think we can learn a good deal about John Bonham's family.

It will be noticed that in neither document is any disposition made of the lands of Bonham and Berwick St. James. The widow was to skin them pretty bare, but she was evidently not to inherit them. The son John was to have tenements in Salisbury and the profits of land rented at Little Horningsham, but there is no indication that he was to have the lands at Bonham and Berwick St. James. Indeed, the fact that his mother was to have all their contents seems to indicate that they were not intended for him. What, then, actually happened to them? The probability is that they went to the testator's half-brother, Thomas Bonham, of Wishford, for they were certainly in the hands of his son a few years later. It will be remembered that John's father in his will had decreed that if John were 'to disturb, aggravate or in any way molest' his relatives at Wishford then all his interests in his father's estate were to go to them. But I do not think that there is any reason to suppose that this clause of the will ever became operative or was the reason for the transfer. A more likely solution of the riddle is that the younger John was perhaps illegitimate, and was not the son of the elder John's lawful wife. In a document granting a lease in Berwick St. James in 1406/7 the grantors are styled 'John Bonham, senior and John Bonham, the son of Margaret Rous'. John Bonham senior was certainly the John Bonham with whom we are now dealing, for he was the owner of Berwick St. James at

Close Rolls, Vol. VII,
8 Hen. IV.

the date named. It is curious that he should associate his illegitimate son with himself in the formal granting of a lease, but the two men are referred to in identical terms in other documents of the period and I think there can be little doubt that the ' John, my son ', referred to in the will was in fact this John, his illegitimate son by Margaret Rous. The reversion of the Bonham and Berwick St. James property to the Wishford branch is thus easily accounted for.

Of the daughters mentioned in the will we know nothing definite, but I feel pretty well convinced that the daughter Edith, who was to receive ' one silver cup with cover and 50 of the best sheep in my fold ' was none other than the Edith Bonham who was destined to become Abbess of Shaftesbury and so to attain one of the highest positions open to women in the kingdom. The Abbess's parentage is nowhere stated, so far as I have been able to discover, but I have found no other Edith Bonham who fits the circumstances so aptly, both as to date and to family. Edith Bonham, who had up to then been Prioress, was elected Abbess of Shaftesbury on 15 November 1441 and the royal assent was given on 25 November, just thirty years after the date of the will, so that the Edith of the will would be of a ripe age suitable for the position. It will be remembered too that her aunt Agnes, who had inherited under both her father's and grandfather's wills, had been a nun of Shaftesbury as early as 1386. The fact also that her mother's curious arrangement for the payment of her dowry was drawn up at Shaftesbury Abbey is not without significance, as it shows that the family were in close relations with that house. Edith Bonham succeeded Margaret Stourton as Abbess and the Stourtons were near neighbours and friends of the Bonham family. Edith held the office till her death in 1460.

Patent Rolls, 1441.

CHAPTER V

THE MANOR OF GREAT WISHFORD IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

WE must now go back to Great Wishford, which had been left to Nicholas's widow Edith for life, with remainder to her son Thomas.

How long Edith survived we do not know ; I have found no subsequent mention of her name in any contemporary document, but Thomas Bonham (F.2) seems to have taken charge at once and walked worthily in the steps of his father, filling many important posts.

Before discussing his matrimonial and family affairs, which I have found difficult to unravel, I propose to give a brief catalogue of the various appearances which he makes in official documents.

In 1387, the year after his father's death, he was having trouble with the Exchequer over seizures of his father's property by too zealous officials in connexion with various offices which his father had held in his lifetime. The Treasurer and Barons of the Exchequer were ordered to desist from these seizures on the score that although the deceased had in fact held the Commissions referred to, he had never held any sessions nor received any fees or fines in respect of them. P.R.O. *Fine Rolls*,
1387.

Thomas seems to have been much mixed up in the affairs of the Church, especially in those of the lately founded monastery of Edington, which was served by a particular class of monks of the Augustinian Order called 'Bonhommes'. The play on his own name may have pleased him and we find that various licences were granted to him and others, acting presumably as trustees, to transfer property to that house and to the Abbey of Shaftesbury. The church of Edington Priory still stands and is one of the most beautiful churches in Wiltshire. P.R.O. *Patent Rolls*,
1392 and 1406.
Wilts. N. & Q.,
Vol. III, p. 74.

In 1394 there was a dispute over the succession to Joan, Abbess of Shaftesbury, and Thomas Bonham and others were given charge of the Abbey till further orders. In 1409 he was to inquire 'touching the bondmen and tenants in P.R.O. *Patent Rolls*,
1394.
Ibid., 1409.

bondage of Sybil, prioress of Amesbury, at her manor of Melksham, who have leagued together to refuse the customs and services due '. It may be remembered that his father before him had also been commissioned to take action on behalf of the Prioress of Amesbury and to arrest her confrater, an apostate friar, probably a Lollard.

P.R.O. *Patent Rolls*,
1403.

In 1403 he was appointed with others to inquire into the maladministration of the alien priory of Hayling, Co. Southampton, in the King's hands on account of the war with France, by John de Buket, late farmer of the same.

P.R.O. *Ancient
Corrce.*, Vol. 43,
No. 165.

In 1418 he addressed to the Bishop of Durham a long letter, which is preserved in the Public Record Office, reporting on an attempt made by him, as Justice of the Peace, to suppress a riotous band which had forcibly seized the manor of Ebbesborne Wake near Tisbury. In this case, however, the Bishop was approached probably in his lay rather than in his clerical capacity, for he was Thomas Langley and was Chancellor of England as well as Bishop of Durham.

But Thomas Bonham was much employed in secular as well as in ecclesiastical affairs.

In 1394, and again in 1410, he was High Sheriff for the county of Wiltshire. In 1392 he and his brother John were Commissioners of Array for the county. In 1394 he was Justice of the Peace and in 1407 Escheator.

In 1406 he was associated with the Bishop of Salisbury, the Duke of York and William Stourton in a Commission to raise money for the King.

In 1408 he was to report on a serious riot at Charlton, Wiltshire.

P.R.O. *Patent Rolls*,
1419.

In 1419 he was again to raise a loan for the King and was granted a Commission of Array

for defence against the King of Castile and Léon, who has prepared a great armada of ships and vessels of Spain with no small number of the King's enemies and proposes to send it shortly to do harm to the King and his and to burn and destroy the ships and shipping of the realm and invade the realm.

It is curious to notice how close is the parallel between the public duties entrusted to Thomas Bonham and those entrusted to his father Nicholas. They run on almost identical lines, both in ecclesiastical and in secular matters, and a final touch is added when we find that just as Nicholas was entrusted together with Hugh Cheyne in 1383 with surveying the work to be carried out at the Castle of Old

Sarum, so Thomas, his son, was given the task in 1403, together with John Bernard, of repairing all the King's castles and manors of the Duchy of Lancaster in the counties of Southampton, Wiltshire, Berkshire, Dorset and Oxford, while, in the same year, he was to inquire into the maladministration of the King's castle at Marlborough.

This record of public life of father and son, extending over a period of fifty-four years, is a fine one, and I am inclined to think that it marks the high peak of Bonham achievement and that later generations, though they produced many eminent men, never quite touched the level of these West Country squires. Thomas Bonham of Stanway Hall in the reign of Henry VIII was perhaps a more powerful and prominent man, but he was branded with the curse of his age, the greed of wealth and power, and would have scorned the simplicity of these simple country gentlemen, who did their duty to their God, their country and their families and passed on their quiet way without vain-glory or advertisement.

Although we know so much of Thomas Bonham's busy official life, his private affairs are much more difficult to disentangle. Unfortunately his will has not come down to us and the only personal touch we have with him is through his Inquest post mortem, which, as usual, gives us little more than the list of the lands which he held at the time of his death and the name and age of his eldest son and heir. Even his matrimonial arrangements are something of a mystery, but I think I have now straightened them out and discovered that he was twice married.

His first wife was Katherine Knottingley, daughter and heir of John Knottingley, lord of the neighbouring Manor of Bathampton Wylde and of adjoining properties which he had recently acquired from the Lambard family. This marriage must have taken place in or before 1382, four years before his father's death, for in that year we have a settlement of part of the bride's inheritance. This document concerns the Manor of Hanging Langford, part of the Knottingley estate, which is handed over to two trustees or feoffees, Richard Bonham and John Chitterne, in trust for Thomas Bonham and Katherine his wife, with remainder, in default of issue, to the right heirs of Thomas. John Chitterne was that same Archdeacon of Salisbury who has already appeared as one of the executors of Nicholas Bonham's will. His name crops up over and over again in the contemporary Bonham records and he was evidently a close friend of the family. The other trustee, Richard

P.R.O. *Close Rolls*,
1409.

P.R.O. *Feet of Fines*,
Wilts., File 54, 1-6,
Ric. II, No. 38.

Bonham (E.4), was doubtless that same Richard who was a verderer of Groveley Forest from 1362 to 1366. He was probably an uncle of Thomas Bonham.

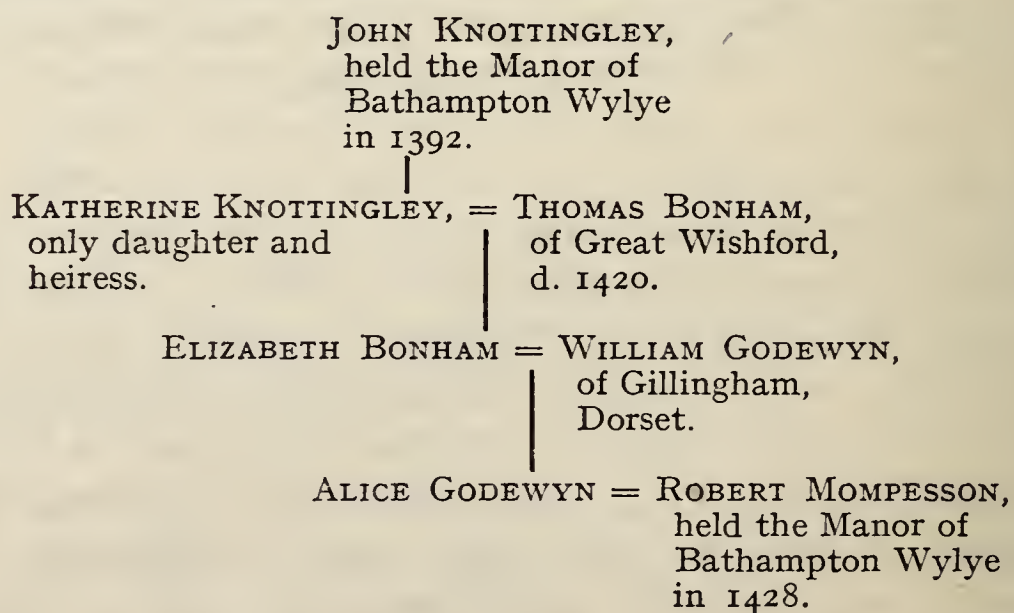
This document is important, for it gives us a key to the solution of the puzzle of Thomas Bonham's marriages. For various reasons, to be touched upon later, I was inclined to believe that the Thomas Bonham who married Katherine Knottingley in 1382 could not have been the same Thomas Bonham who died in 1420 leaving a widow named Alice; but the history of this Manor of Hanging Langford and of the Manors of Bathampton Wylle and Depford, which were the inheritance of his first wife, seems to prove conclusively that there was only one Thomas Bonham in possession of Great Wishford from the date of his father Nicholas's death in 1386 until his own departure from this world in 1420. He was paying quit-rent on the Hanging Langford and Bathampton Wylle properties from 1415 to the date of his death in 1420 when munture (the heriot due from a subordinate fee) was claimed in respect of them.

Scrope's *History of Castle Combe*, note on p. 209, and *W.A.M.* Vol. II, pp. 266-7.

Thomas had by his first wife, Katherine Knottingley, an only daughter, Elizabeth (G.1), who married William Godwin of Gillingham, Co. Dorset. William and Elizabeth Godwin had also an only daughter and heir Alice, who married Robert Mompesson, and it was this Robert Mompesson, the husband of Thomas Bonham's granddaughter, who inherited the Knottingley properties on the death of Thomas Bonham in 1420 (see genealogical table).

CHART III

DESCENT OF THE MANOR OF BATHAMPTON WYLYE



The Mompessons were a rich and important family in the West Country from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries. I have heard it stated that they were of Jewish origin, but

I know of no grounds for the statement and they themselves claimed to be descended from one Roger de Montpezon, who came over with William the Conqueror. The family seems now to have died out entirely, but they have left a worthy memorial behind them in Mompesson House, perhaps the loveliest of all the lovely group of houses in the Close of Salisbury which makes so perfect a setting for the glory of the great cathedral. It is now used as the judge's lodging, when he comes on assize. 1135778

We do not know in what year Katherine Bonham succeeded to her father's estates, but the father was certainly still alive as late as 1392 when he held a fifth of a knight's fee in Bathampton Wylle. Katherine herself must have died before 1400, for in 1401, according to Thomas Bonham's Inquest post mortem, his son by his second wife was born.

Of the second wife we know nothing, not even her family name, nor the number of children that she bore. All we know is that her Christian name was Alice, that she survived her husband and held Great Wishford for life and was still in possession there in 1428.

There is some reason to suppose that before his death in 1420, Thomas Bonham removed to Salisbury and handed over Great Wishford to another Thomas, for in the Register of Bishop Metford in 1410 we find that a licence to hold religious services in their private chapel was granted to Thomas Bonham *of Sarum* and his wife Alice, while in the previous year a similar licence was granted to Thomas Bonham *of Wishford*, who is described as a 'bachelor' (domisellus). Moreover in 1418 William Algar was presented to the living of Great Wishford by Thomas Bonham, who is here again described as 'a bachelor'.

P.R.O. *Req. and assessments relating to Feudal aids*, 1428.

Phillips's *Institutiones Clericorum* for Wiltshire.

MS. in Wishford Church.

Thomas Bonham's Inquest post mortem only tells us that at the time of his death he held half the Manor of Great Wishford, a small property at Compton Chamberlain and the Knottingley estates, which he held in right of his first wife, and that his son William, then nineteen years of age, was his heir.

P.R.O. *Chancery Inq. p.m.*, Hen. V, File 48, No. 67.

But the Inquest quotes a fine of the year 1406, by which half the Manors of Great Wishford and Hanging Langford were settled on trustees for the benefit for life of Thomas and Alice his wife, with remainder to the heirs of Thomas. So far as the Hanging Langford property was concerned, this grant to the second wife Alice for life of part of a property which had come to her husband in virtue of his first marriage seems unjustifiable in law nor was it ever carried out in

P.R.O. Req. and
assessments relating to
Feudal aids, 1428.

practice, for while Alice duly held Great Wishford in 1428, Robert Mompesson, the rightful heir, was in possession of Hanging Langford in that year.

But the importance of this fine to our family history lies, not in this little point of law, but in the identity of one of the two trustees who were parties to it. The first of these was the ever-faithful John Chitterne, but the second was 'John, son of Thomas Bonham'. I have found it quite impossible to place either the man himself or his father and the knowledge of their existence raises possibilities of complications in the family tree which make one's head reel. John cannot have been the son of the Thomas in whose favour the settlement was made, for that Thomas's *eldest* son William was only five when the document was drawn up. I am reluctant to think that Thomas, the parson of Baverstock, so far forgot his vows as to father a son. It is obvious that the Thomas of Wishford who, as a 'bachelor' was licensed to hold services in 1409 and presented to the living of Wishford in 1418, could not be the father of a legitimate son in 1406. It was largely for these reasons that, as mentioned above, I at one time doubted that the Thomas Bonham who married Katherine Knottingley in 1382 could be the same person as the Thomas who left a widow Alice in 1420, but the fact that his estate paid what may be termed the equivalent of death duties on the Knottingley estates in 1420 seems to establish this identity without a doubt.

I fear that I must leave the identity of this other Thomas and his son John and of the elusive 'bachelor' to be established by some future research worker. But though I am completely baffled by this John's past I think I can make a suggestion as to his possible future. Is it not possible that he was the 'John Bonham of Wishford' who in 1431 held a quarter of a knight's fee in Fifehead Neville in Co. Dorset? If so, he was almost certainly the ancestor of the Hazelbury branch of the Bonham family. (See my *History of the Manor of Hazelbury*.)

We have dealt now with John and Thomas, the two most important of Nicholas's (E.3) sons, and must add notes on their brothers and sisters, in order to complete the record of their generation.

(F.3) *Cristina*.

(F.7) *Sibilla*, nun of
Wilton.

(F.6) *Agnes*, nun of
Shaftesbury.

} All we know about them is
that they are mentioned in
their father's will. Agnes
is mentioned in her brother
John's will also.

(F.4) *William Bonham* was nominated in 1382 by his father to the living of Great Wishford. A priest of the same name was rector of Aston Clynton in the diocese of Lincoln in 1390 and died in 1403. This may or may not have been the same man, but William Bonham was certainly not rector of Great Wishford in 1411, for in that year one Thomas Bacon, one of the executors of his brother John's will, was in possession of that living.

P.R.O. *Patent Rolls*,
1390 and 1403.

(F.5) *Thomas*, the second brother of the name of Thomas, was a priest and rector of Baverstoke, not far from Wishford. His name frequently appears in public documents but there is not much of interest to record of him. He was much employed by other members of the family as a trustee in their numerous settlements.

(F.8) *Nicholas* inherited the Newham, Sutton Veny and Crockerton properties and we know little about him. His wife's name was Isobel and the properties were formally handed over to them and their heirs, with remainder in case of failure of issue to Thomas Bonham of Great Wishford (his brother) in 1390, probably on the occasion of their marriage. Nicholas was granting leases in 1400, but died before 1409, when his widow Isobel was in charge of the estates.

W.A.M. Vol. 37
pp. 37-40.

We do not know what family they had, but in 1414 one Walter Bonham, who was probably a son, owned the property. From 1467 to 1484 a John Bonham was in possession, having purchased the estates from his brother Nicholas. Then comes a silence of nearly 100 years and in 1577/8 we surprisingly find Walter Bonham of Great Wishford (L.2) as owner. The presumption is that the line of Nicholas and Isobel had died out and that the property had reverted, in accordance with the original settlement, to the right heir of Thomas Bonham of Wishford. It is possible, however, that this Elizabethan Walter may have purchased it, for, as we shall see later, he had a passion for rounding off the family property, and never a brass farthing to pay for his purchases. His system seems to have been to purchase and mortgage and, as he was never in a position to pay any interest, this unfortunate hobby proved the ruin of the Bonham family and the loss of all their property in Wiltshire, including Great Wishford. This was the system which he adopted in the case of the Newham property, for in 1577/8 he was raising money on it from one Richard Chapman, *alias* Hiscox of Huish, Co. Wilts., yeoman, and in 1580 Chapman foreclosed and the property was transferred to him and his heirs.

The next generation starts off with a blank, for of William (G.2), the son and heir of Thomas, aged nineteen in 1420, I have been able to discover nothing at all. His mother, as already stated, was still in possession of the manor in 1428 and possibly till much later, and the probability is that William died before her, possibly before attaining his majority. There can be little doubt that the next owner, another Thomas (G.3), was his younger brother, for in a document dated 1435 relating to the Bonham property, he speaks of his father Thomas (F.2) and his uncle John (F.1), late owner of the property, and in another document of 1445 he states that the Wishford property descended to him by the death of his father Thomas. William is completely ignored, so I think it may safely be assumed that he never actually reigned at Wishford.

P.R.O. *Close Rolls*,
1435.

CHAPTER VI

THE LEGEND OF SEVEN AT A BIRTH

THOMAS BONHAM II (G.3) was not much occupied in public affairs, as his father and grandfather had been, and yet he is perhaps the best known of all the Bonham family. He married in 1440 a wife named Edith and licence to hold services (*audiendi divina*) at Great Wishford was granted by the Bishop of Salisbury to the newly-married couple in the same year.

The lady is the real heroine of the legend which has given this couple a greater notoriety than has fallen to the lot of any other members of the Bonham family, for she is said to have presented her husband with seven children at a birth. The story has often been told and is a favourite theme for newspaper articles, but the oldest version of the tale, quoted both by John Aubrey and Sir C. Hoare, is found in the parish register of Great Wishford Church and is in the hand of Robert Powell, who was curate there in 1640. It runs as follows :

There is in the body of our Church an ancient monument of some of the ancestors of the Bonhams, and said to have been that Bonham and his wife that had seven children at one birth. The inscription on the tomb is this that follows, word for word :—

‘ HIC JACET THOMAS BONHAM, ARMIGER, QUONDAM PATRONUS HUIUS ECCLESIAE, QUI QUIDEM THOMAS OBIIT VICESIMO NONO DIE MAII, ANNO DOM. 1473 : ET EDITHA UXOR EJUS, QUAE QUIDEM EDITHA OBIIT VICESIMO SEXTO DIE APRILIS, ANNO DOM. 1469.—QUORUM ANIMABUS PROPITIETUR DEUS. AMEN.’

(Here lieth Thomas Bonham, gentleman, once patron of this Church, the which Thomas died the 29th day of May, A.D. 1473 : and Edith, his wife, the which Edith died on the 26th day of April, A.D. 1469. May God have mercy on their souls. Amen.)

They were both buried under the great marble stone in the middle alley of our Church, and the inscription was cut in brass. Beneath this inscription, on the lower end

of the same marble stone towards the choir, there were the small statues or images of nine young children, set in brass, all of which I myself knew standing there above 20 years, but of late one of them is broken out of the stone, by means of some violence or negligence of them that wrought in the Church and laide a great quarry stone upon the grave of Robert Kellman, lately buried. The statues of the said Thomas and Edith Bonham are said to be in an hollow vaulted arch under the wall in the North side of our Church, and such statues there are. His statue lies next to the door of the said side, and her statue at the feet of his. By me, Robert Powell, Curate there, April 10th, A.D. 1640.

John Aubrey, writing nineteen years later, in 1659, says in his *Natural History of Wiltshire* that he has seen the curate's entry in the register and adds :

This Mr. Bonham's wife had two children at one birth, the first time : and he being troubled at it travelled, and was absent seven years. After his return she was delivered of seven children at one birth. In this parish is a confident tradition that these seven children were all baptized at the font in this Church, and that they were brought thither in a kind of chardger, which was dedicated to this church, and hung on two nailes, which are to be seen there yet, near the bellfree on the south side. Some old men are yet living that doe remember the chardger.

Sir R. C. Hoare in his *History of Modern Wiltshire*, published early in the nineteenth century, quotes the following particulars which had been sent to him :

There is a very old monument, in memory of one Bonham, lord of the Manor, in solid stone, at full length, drest in pilgrim's habit, with a leathern belt round his waist, and pouch or scrip by his side ; and, as report says, was the father of the 7 children born at one birth, and all brought to church in a sieve to be baptized. The occasion of this wonderful event was said to be that, their family coming on very fast, they were mistrustful that they should not be able to maintain them, and so agreed to part for 7 years, and if neither party was seen or heard of, to be at liberty to marry again. He went abroad, and she was in England ; the time was nearly expired, and the lady on the point of marriage. The news was made known to him (report says) by a witch, who conveyed him home instantly, and found his lady to be married the next day. He was denied admittance, for he had not shaved himself the whole time, and no one remembered his person until he produced the ring

they had broken. Then he was introduced to his lady, and at the next birth she had 7 children, and it is said was buried in the church, and a representation of them laid in brass, which is now to be seen.

I have quoted all three accounts as they are an amusing illustration of how a story will grow in the telling. It continues to grow even now, for I was assured by a member of the family not long ago that Thomas had spent his seven years abroad as a warrior in one of the Crusades. When it was pointed out to him that the middle of the fifteenth century was perhaps rather late in the day for that particular way of dodging one's family troubles, he reluctantly acknowledged that it might have been a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Sir Richard Hoare's early nineteenth-century informant's description of Thomas's statue as being dressed in a pilgrim's garb is probably responsible for this particular embroidery. One suspects Sir Richard's informant, indeed, of having drowsed over his *Odyssey* for his account of Thomas's return, and there is a mixed flavour of the seven wise men of Gotham and of Edward Lear's 'Jumbles' in the seven children in a sieve.

I am assured that the dress worn by Thomas Bonham in his effigy is not that of a pilgrim at all, but the ordinary garb of a substantial layman of the period, such as he in fact was. It is unusual, however, to find statues of laymen of the period habited otherwise than in armour.

All these monuments have been moved since Powell wrote his account in the church register, but the effigies of Thomas and Edith Bonham are still there for all to see, and under the matting in the north aisle one can find the great stone with some of the brasses of the children still *in situ* and the matrices from which others have been wrenched. These are the first representations of any members of the Bonham family which have come down to us.

If we examine the little that was known of Thomas Bonham and compare it with the legend we get some rather curious results.

In 1435 he makes his first appearance in a document by which a trustee grants him the Bonham and Berwick St. James properties. If this, as I think probable, marked his coming of age, then he would have been six years old when his father died in 1420.

P.R.O. *Close Rolls*,
1435.

He married in 1440, and in 1445 he made a settlement of the Wishford property on himself and his wife, with remainder, 'in case of their dying without legitimate offspring, which God forbid (*quod absit*)' to his rightful heirs.

Br. Mus. Add. Ch.
15,088 and 15,302.

This shows clearly that after five years of married life the dilatory Edith still showed no signs of her peculiar claim to fame.

Br. Mus. Add. Ch.
15,089 and 15,090.

In 1449 another note is struck, for in that year he handed over to trustees the whole of his property in Great Wishford, Berwick St. James, the advowson of the church of Great Wishford, the Manor of Bonham and properties at Wincanton, Roundhill, Stavordale and Gaspore, to be dealt with in accordance with a charter which he had already given them. This marked the birth of their son and heir, Walter, who, according to the age given to him in his father's Inquest post mortem in 1473 (*aet.* 24) was born in that year. No mention is made of twins, but Edith had taken the first step on the road to fame.

It is worth mentioning here that the first of these documents bears a beautiful Bonham seal, wrapped in its original little bag of taffeta.

But, twins or no twins, Thomas did not set out on his seven years' journey at once, for in the following year, 1450, the year of Jack Cade's rebellion, he and others were commissioned 'to arrest traitors and rebels in Wiltshire and the adjacent counties'.

Then follows an absolute blank of nineteen years till 1468, when he presented Richard Burleigh to the living of Great Wishford, and nothing more till 1473, when he died.

There is probably nothing really significant in this lack of records, for Thomas Bonham was evidently at no time of his life much occupied in the public service, the above-mentioned commission to arrest rebels in the troubled times after Jack Cade's rebellion being the only reference to him in official documents, but there was certainly plenty of time from 1450 to 1468 for the seven years' absence of the legend and its rather overwhelming aftermath.

The legend must certainly have had some foundation in fact, but the knowledge that Edith was childless for the first nine years of her married life makes one suspect that the climax may not have been quite so stupendous as the legend relates. If, after so many years of waiting, she produced seven children in rapid succession, it would be quite enough to set village tongues wagging and village church bells ringing. I have before me, as I write, an extract from *The Times* of 19 January 1938, reporting that a native woman from Nyassaland had given birth to seven children in twelve months, triplets and quadruplets. I have even read of the prolific Edith's reputed feat being equalled in other parts of the world, though, fortunately, never sur-

passed. The *Illustrated London News* of 25 December 1937 published a photograph of a tomb at Hamelin, recording that in 1600 one Anna Breyers of that place gave birth at one time to two boys and five girls, who were all baptized and died shortly afterwards. The seven babies in swaddling clothes are all depicted on the tomb.

But the story of Edith Bonham's feat is a good one and it is a pity to spoil it by too close inquiry, so let us pity poor Thomas and leave it at that.

His Inquest post mortem tells us little except the list of properties which he held at the date of his death, in May 1473, at Bonham and Wincanton in Somerset and at Great Wishford, Berwick St. James, etc., in Wiltshire, and states that his son and heir, Walter, was then twenty-four years of age.

We may presume, I think, both from the legend and from the nine little brasses in the church, that Thomas and Edith did actually have nine children, but the only one of whom we have any reliable record is the eldest son and heir, Walter. We do not even know how many were boys and how many girls. Hutchins states that Richard Turberville of Bere Regis, Co. Dorset, who died in 1504/5, married Joan, daughter and heir of Thomas Bonham, Co. Wilts., and the arms of Turberville impaling Bonham are recorded to have been in one of the windows of Bere Regis Church about the year 1600. This Joan may quite well have been one of the famous seven, though she was certainly not her father's heir.

P.R.O. *Chancery Inq.*
p.m., File 45, No. 41.

Hutchins's *Dorset*,
Vol. I, p. 138.

The Bonham family were subject to curious cycles of expansion and decay and the period with which we are now dealing was definitely one of expansion, for it was responsible for the creation of two new and important branches of the family, at Hazelbury, Co. Wilts, and in Essex.

In 1475 John Bonham of Plumber, Co. Dorset, married Anne Croke, one of the daughters and co-heiresses of John Croke of Hazelbury and Wick, and founded a family there. I was inclined to believe at one time that he might have been one of the seven, but I am now of opinion that, as already stated (see p. 36) he was an earlier offset from the Wishford branch. (For the Hazelbury branch, see my *History of the Manor of Hazelbury*.)

But the Essex branch is even more important from the point of view of this family history. In 1497 there appeared in Essex a Thomas Bonham, son of Thomas Bonham, who quickly made for himself a great position and died in 1532, a very rich and powerful man. The Essex branch used the same arms as the Wiltshire Bonhams and there can be little

doubt that they came from Wiltshire. The matter will be further discussed when we come to deal with the Essex branch and is only mentioned here because, so far as dates go, the first Thomas of Essex may quite well have been one of the septet that were carried in a sieve, like fledglings in a nest, to their baptism in Great Wishford Church.

Miscell. Gen. et Hist.,
5th series Vol. III,
p. 205.

Thomas's heir Walter (H.1) only enjoyed the property for four years, for he died in 1477. He married Elizabeth, daughter of John Pole of Sapperton and Coates, Co. Glos., and of Poole and Chelworth, Co. Wilts. Her mother, in her will, proved November 1488, leaves silver cups to 'my daughter Elizabeth Bonham' and to 'William Bonham'. This William (J.1) was the son and heir of Walter and Elizabeth, as we learn from Walter's Inquests post mortem. There were two of these Inquests, one for the Wiltshire and another for the Somerset property, both taken in 1477, and it is curious that the Wiltshire Inquest gives the heir's age as seven, while the Somerset Inquest states that he was nine.

William Bonham (J.1) had a longer innings than his father Walter and seems to have taken up the public duties performed by the earlier Bonhams of Wishford, for he was Sheriff of the County in 1514 and his name is found in various commissions for local work but none of them is of very great interest. He presented to the living of Wishford in 1518. His wife was Mary, a daughter of Edmund Lambert of Maiden Bradleigh and sister of Sir Nicholas Lambert, Lord Mayor of London, and of Richard Lambert, Alderman of London, who was buried at Great Wishford. Her great-grandfather John Lambert (or Lambard) had been owner of the Bathampton Wylke property which he sold to Sir John Knottingley, and which (as already related) passed to the latter's daughter Katherine Bonham and to the Mompesson family. I have not discovered the year in which William Bonham died, but he was succeeded by his son, Walter II, as we learn from the latter's Inquest post mortem.

P.R.O. Chancery Inq.
p.m., Series II, File 46,
No. 63.

We know even less of Walter Bonham II (K.1) than of his father and grandfather, but we have his Inquest post mortem for the Somerset property, from which we learn that his wife's name was Mary, that he died childless in 1527, and that his widow held the Manor of Bonham 'by right of increase', whatever that may be. According to Hutchins she was Mary Mawdley, daughter of Roger Mawdley of Nunney, Co. Somerset. She afterwards married Robert Turberville of Bere Regis, thus making a second connexion between the Bonham and Turberville families.

Walter Bonham, dying childless, was succeeded by his

younger brother, Nicholas II (K.2), as we learn from the latter's Inquest post mortem. Nicholas held both Great Wishford and Bonham from 1527 to 1559.

He is a person of some importance in our history, for it was he who first began that extension of the family property which, in the next generation, proved fatal to the fortunes of the Wiltshire Bonhams. He joined in the general scramble for Church lands and in 1544 bought that portion of the Manor of Great Wishford which had belonged to Maiden Bradley Priory. It had been granted by Henry VIII in the same year to Edward Seymour, Earl of Hertford (better known as the Protector Somerset), who promptly sold it to Nicholas Bonham. It had doubtless long been a Naboth's vineyard to the Bonham family, but, as so often happened with these spoils of the Church, it brought bad luck with it.

Br. Mus. Add. Ch.
15,104, and
Gairdner's *Letters and
papers of the reign of
Henry VIII*, 1544.

I have already mentioned the existence of this third manor in Great Wishford (see p. 9), but very little seems to be known about it and it has proved a puzzle to Wiltshire antiquarians, so that a few more details which I have discovered may not come amiss.

In 1347 Henry, Prior of Maiden Bradley, complained to the Itinerant Justices at New Sarum that John de Bonham (D.2) and Elizabeth, who had been the wife of Adam at Ford, had unjustly disseised him of his free tenement in Great Wishford and of 34s. 4d. of rent accruing to him from it. The Prior claimed that the premises were in his lordship and were held of him. A former Prior, a certain Radulphus, was seised of the property in the time of Henry III (1216-72) and the Church of the Blessed Mary of Maiden Bradley had enjoyed the rent from time immemorial until this Radulphus in the time of Henry III demised the property to a certain Henry Daubeney and his heirs to be held of Radulphus and his successors, rendering yearly the above-named rent. The rent having fallen into arrear, the present Prior had caused a distress to be made on the premises, and the tenants, at the instigation of John Bonham and Elizabeth atte Ford, had forcibly resisted. He claimed 12 marks as damages and arrears of rent.

P.R.O. *Assize Rolls*,
1434, m. 72.

What the result of the squabble was we do not know, nor is it of any consequence, but the case proves that the grant of the Manor to Maiden Bradley dated from long before the day of that Henry Daubeney on whose death in 1278 the larger and more important Manor in Great Wishford was halved between his descendants, the Bonhams and atte Fords. It was perhaps granted by Patrick de Cadurcis (Chaworth), to whom Henry I had given the whole Manor,

or by his son-in-law, the first Henry Daubeney of Wishford, and the grant may well have been made on the foundation of the Priory about the year 1154.

This was the property which Nicholas Bonham now purchased ; it consisted of seven messuages, three cottages and 400 acres of land in Great Wishford and a small property of forty-eight acres in Stapleford. Not content with this extravagance, he committed the more serious one of fathering a large and quarrelsome family of four sons and seven daughters, all of whom had to be provided for.

His wife was Alice, daughter of Walter Mohun.

P.C.C. 29 Wales.

His will has survived and it is interesting to compare it with that of his fourteenth-century namesake. We find here little of that spacious and orderly charity which was so marked a characteristic of the older will. He leaves to Salisbury Cathedral 3s. 4d. ; to his parish church of Great Wishford 6s. 8d. and ' the pax of silver which they had in the Church at the making hereof ' ; to the church of Berwick St. James 2s. ; and ' to every of my godchildren 4d. '.

His wife Alice was to have the manor house of Wishford with all its appurtenances for life ; his eldest son John was to have his Manor of Bonham and his lands at Berwick St. James, Barford St. Martin and Foulston. The rest of his property, consisting of tenements in Wishford and a small estate at Laverstoke, Co. Wilts., was left for ' the preferment of the residue of my children, both sons and daughters, according to the discretion of Alice, my wife, my executrix, and Walter Mohun esq. her father, my overseer '. To Walter Mohun he left ' for a remembrance, mine own riding gelding '.

This last is the only personal touch in the whole document. There are no bequests to servants or friends and the younger members of the family are lumped together as ' the residue of my children '. It is a very different will from that of the elder Nicholas (E.3), with its ordered provision for Church, family and dependents and its revelation of the personality of its writer, but times had changed since the fourteenth century and the mid-sixteenth century was, with all its splendour, a much harsher and more vulgar age : ' Every man for himself, and the devil take the hindmost.'

P.R.O. Chancery Inq.
p.m., Series II,
File 124, No. 199 ;
and *ibid.*, File 124,
No. 171.

We have Nicholas Bonham's Inquests post mortem for both the Wiltshire and Somerset properties. They are both very long, but add little to our knowledge except the fact that his son and heir, John, was sixteen years of age at the date of his death and that Mary Turberville, the widow of his eldest brother Walter (K.1), was still alive and drawing for life the annual sum of £8 from the Bonham estate for her dower.

CHAPTER VII

DISASTER

ON the death of Nicholas II, on 13 January 1559, troubles rained fast on the Bonham family. His eldest son John (L.1) died two months later, on 28 March, and John's younger brother, Walter (L.2), aged thirteen, succeeded to the property.

P.R.O. *Chancery Inq.*
p.m., Series II,
Bundle 999, No. 21.

Their mother was granted by Queen Elizabeth the wardship and marriage of her son Walter and the custody of his estates during his minority. She cannot have been very young, for she was the mother of eleven living children, but she was now a widow with assured means and it was perhaps this fact which brought her a second husband in the person of one Anthony Styleman, who 'hung up his hat', as the Irish say, in the hall of the Bonhams at Great Wishford.

Br. Mus. Add. Ch.
15,106

In 1569, when Walter Bonham was twenty-three years of age, a suit in Chancery was brought against him by one Robert Hewlett of Berwick St. James, concerning the lease of a farm there called 'Bonham's land'. The plaintiff averred that Walter Bonham and his stepfather, Anthony Styleman, had obtained possession of the original deed of lease and turned him out of his holding and let it to another. The case is of no importance, but it shows Walter Bonham and his stepfather working hand in hand. It is also of family interest, for in his reply Walter sets forth his title to the property. He says:

P.R.O. *Chancery*
Proceedings,
Series II, Bundle 81,
No. 69.

Long tyme before the said William Bonham [J.1] one Thomas Bonham and Edythe his wife [of seven at a birth fame] were seased as of fee tayle of the property. They had a son Walter Bonham [H.1] and died. Walter Bonham died and left the property to his son Thomas. Thomas died and left the property to his son William [J.1]. William died and left the property to Nicholas Bonham [K.2], father of this Defendant. Nicholas Bonham died about twelve years last past, and this Defendant inherited it.

This statement puzzled me a good deal. Walter goes back correctly as far as his grandfather, William (J.1),

though without mentioning that his uncle Walter at one time held the property, but from there backwards he is hopelessly at variance with all the evidence of Inquests post mortem etc. I can only conclude that Walter, like many others, did not know who his great-grandfather was and I think we can safely disregard his amateur attempt at a family tree and stick to the evidence afforded by official and more reliable documents.

In 1573/4 Walter Mohun, the father of Alice Styleman, Walter's mother, died. He had been the overseer of Nicholas Bonham's will and had probably kept a tight hand on the property, but as soon as he was dead, Alice and her husband came to an arrangement with her son Walter and handed over the Wishford property to him. This arrangement led to trouble between Walter and his sisters and led to a family lawsuit, which we shall discuss presently.

Then in 1576 Walter, now aged thirty, followed his father's unfortunate example and tried to round off the family estate by the purchase of land. It was not Church property this time, but that other half of the Manor which had been left nearly 300 years before by Henry Daubeny to the atte Fords and had been in the hands of their descendants ever since.

In 1347 it was owned by Elizabeth, the widow of Adam atte Ford. She married, as her second husband, Robert de Loundres, who presented to the living of Great Wishford in 1349 in right of his wife. By 1407 it had come to the Brent family, for John Brent presented in that year. It remained with the Brents until Anne, the daughter and heir of Richard Brent and the wife of Thomas, Lord Powlett, inherited it from her father in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. It was from the Powletts that Walter Bonham bought it. The price mentioned in the deed is £760, no great sum in modern currency, but it must be remembered that it represented a much higher purchasing power in those days. In any case Walter apparently found difficulty in raising it. In 1574/5 he had already sold a property at Laverstoke. In 1577/8 he mortgaged the family property at Newham, Crockerton, etc., and in the same year his title to the newly acquired property was disputed. The unfortunate man got deeper and deeper into difficulty and began to borrow money right and left.

In 1592 fresh troubles assailed him and he was attacked by his own sisters, Anne Glover (L.10) and Mary Pannell (L.11), who brought a lawsuit against him, alleging that he had conspired with their mother and stepfather to defraud

Br. Mus. Add. Ch.
15,107.

Br. Mus. Add. Ch.
15,108.

them of the legacies to which they were entitled under their father's will. The case shows that the whole family were at loggerheads. Walter maintains that, by the agreement made with his mother and stepfather, when they handed over the Manor of Wishford to him, he had undertaken to make various payments to certain of his brothers and sisters and that he had faithfully carried these out, but that Anne and Mary had been expressly omitted from the agreement, Anne having been already provided for by her grandfather, Walter Mohun, and Anthony Styleman and her mother having undertaken to 'bestow Mary in marriage and give her a porcion'. He gives a list of the whole family and of the various sums which he had paid out on behalf of its members.

The family were :

<i>Sons</i>	<i>Daughters</i>
John (L.1) (died within a year of his father)	Frances (L.5)
Walter (L.2) (the Defendant)	Margarete (L.6)
Edward (L.3)	Margerye (L.7)
Thomas (L.4)	Melior (L.8)
	Edith (L.9)
	Anne (L.10)
	Mary (L.11)

Small wonder that the Wishford estate was strained to support such a crowd, and quarrelsome at that, and that the unfortunate Walter was hard put to it to find money for his purchase of land. This lawsuit seems to have been the last straw, for five years later, in 1597, he had apparently already mortgaged his Wishford estate to Laurence Hyde of The Close, New Sarum, and Nicholas Hyde of The Middle Temple, acting on behalf of Richard (afterwards Sir Richard) Grobham. Walter made a fierce struggle to keep his family acres, at first from Great Wishford, and afterwards from New Sarum, and Grobham evidently had great difficulty in getting possession, for in 1600 Letters Patent were issued by Queen Elizabeth confirming the purchase made by Grobham and enjoining Walter Bonham to keep strictly to his agreement. Walter at last makes his final renunciation in a formal document, undated, signed by himself and his son John (M.1), who describe themselves as 'of Goodwood in the countie of Sussex'. I have tried in vain to trace him at Goodwood and the last I have heard of him was that, while there, he succeeded in inducing a man to give him a bond for a considerable sum. I feel sure that he never repaid it, but all the same I feel very glad that he got it.

Br. Mus. Add. Ch.
15,113,15,115,15,117,
15,114.

Register of Statute
Merchant
Bonds (Salisbury).

I was inclined at first to regard Walter as a spendthrift

and ne'er-do-well, who frittered away the family fortunes, but the more I learned of him and his misfortunes the more I learned to sympathize with him. His purchase of the other half of the Manor was certainly a mistake and he was evidently a muddler, but his bringing up and family life were all against him. We learn something of his personality from a lawsuit, which had nothing whatever to do with the Bonham family, but is curious and amusing and shows at least that Walter had a sense of humour and could express himself in good Elizabethan English. This must be my excuse for relating the case here.

P.R.O. *Town*
Depositions, 246 M.,
Oct. 24, 37 Eliz.

Robert May of Broughton Gifford, an elderly widower of means, while doing the cure at Bath, became infatuated of a young and pretty baker's daughter and married her. Being anxious to deal fairly with the son of his first marriage, Henry May, he handed over his Manors to a nephew in trust for this son. He then proceeded to live for another twenty years and when the son grew up and married he quarrelled with the son's wife and declared that neither she nor her children should ever enjoy a foot of his lands after his son's death, but that his lands should go to his three daughters by the baker's daughter. Then the son Henry and his wife Ellinor got the settlement into their hands and combined to defeat and destroy the reversions to the three daughters. They promulgated and proved an old cancelled will in their favour. Thereupon, in 1598, the three daughters and their husbands instituted proceedings against them. The case was eventually settled by a compromise. But the case itself is of little importance; it is the details of the evidence which are amusing, with all the features of Elizabethan comedy.

First we have the picture of the old man going a-wooing at Bath. He was a kindly and much respected old man and had a faithful servant named John Twyford, who was evidently much distressed by his master's goings on.

John Twyford relates :

This deponent and Robert May did ride together to Salisbury, after that the said Robert (for the cure of some infirmity in his body) had been at the Bath. Robert, upon the way riding, did say : ' John, at my late being at Bath I did see a young woman in a baker's shop, disposing of bread, whom I greatly fancied, so that if ever I did marry, I think verily I should marry with her. Now, boy, if it should be my hap to marry with her, it is very likely, by reason of her young age, I shall have issue by her, yet would not forget the fruit of my first wife.

Wherefore, I pray thee, John, when I come to Bath again, if thou see me go about any such matter of marriage there, put me in mind of thy bedfellow.' By which was meant the said Henry May.

The old man, continuing to make visits to Bath, usually alone, John Twyford, on one of these occasions, reminded him, as he was setting out, of the above conversation and added: 'I pray you, Master, remember my bedfellow'; to which he replied with an assurance as to the provision he would make for his son.

Robert May, in due course, married Joan Sacheffield, the baker's daughter, and John Twyford gives an amusing account of the wedding, from which one can gather it was not altogether a cheerful occasion. He states that 'several ancients of the Bath' were there, as well as the bride's parents, but that, a dispute having arisen among the guests, he was shut out. The dispute evidently related to the marriage settlements and to the provision to be made for the bride in case of the mature bridegroom dying and the bride wishing to marry again. This lack of delicacy on the part of his bride's plebeian relations evidently upset the old gentleman for, 'after the sealing and delivery of the marriage settlement', he told his servant that 'The said Joan might now marry whom she would. Howbeit, whosoever hath her, I have made her a gentlewoman.'

He lived, however, for another twenty years, time enough to see his son married to Ellinor Hinton and to quarrel with his daughter-in-law. It was suggested in the proceedings that this quarrel was not the only reason which decided old Robert May to disinherit Henry's children in favour of his daughters, but that he was also swayed by the fact that the son was a lunatic. It was on this point that Walter Bonham of Great Wishford, who was a friend and neighbour of the Henry Mays, was called in to give evidence. He calls Henry May 'Cousin' and was probably related to him by marriage. Walter Bonham was now aged fifty-two and was already deeply involved with his troubles with his family and the Wishford estate, but the raciness and directness of his written deposition in the May case tell us more of the man himself than any of the other documents at our disposal.

He begins by saying that he had known Henry May and his wife for sixteen or seventeen years and that Henry was

naturally of a very simple and weak capacity, understanding and conceit. And he saith that there is no doubt

of it but the said Henry May is easily led and, as easily as may be, through his natural simplicity and weakness of mind and understanding, to be persuaded and allured to say or do anything either against his own benefit or to the slander of his wife, his child or any of his own sisters, kinsfolk or friends.

He then gives various incidents in support of this statement, of which we need only quote the following :

It was reported how Morgan or May's wife or some other did persuade the said Henry May that he had a pinnace at sea called the ' Green Dragon ', to the end he should buy some beef to victual the said pinnace withal, because when he got any money into his hands he would not depart again with it, though it were to buy himself apparel. And thereupon the said Henry May, gladding to hear he had a pinnace at sea, was contented at the said fair (Upavon) to buy two beefs, as they said, for victualling thereof. And thereat the said Henry May rejoiced, glorying to hear that he had a pinnace at sea, and so persuaded himself.

He also relates the sequel to this incident, how that

on a time about 3 or 4 years ago this deponent and one Morgan, a smith in Salisbury, being at the house of the said Henry May in Wiltshire, the said Morgan, seeing the said Henry's simplicity, said unto him :—' Captain May, you, being a lusty captain, must learn to eat raw beef, such as this is, if you mean to live in the wars ' (meaning a piece of raw beef that was newly brought from the fair at Upavon and lay on the hall board). And thereupon, Henry May, who gloried not a little to be called ' Captain ', answered and said to Morgan—' And so can I eat it ', and therewith Henry, taking a knife, did cut the raw beef and eat 3 or 4 mouthfuls of it so freely as, if Morgan and this deponent had not been there, he would have eaten so much thereof as thereby he would have spoiled himself.

On another occasion :

Once on another time some certain years ago, this deponent came to the house of Henry May and then, walking with him to his backside, Henry May showed this deponent a certain mud wall which, he said, his wife had made for the fencing in of the ground on the backside, and therewith he saith to this deponent :—

' Dost thou see what gugoades [? gew-gaws] here be made ? I will have them down well enough.' And being then asked by what means he would do it. ' I will tell

you what I will do (quoth he). I will buy some peasen or beans (which whether it was this deponent doth not well remember) and I will dig holes under the wall and straw in the beans and fill it up again ; and then I will put my pigs to the wall and they will nozzle for the beans and so throw the wall down.'—Perhaps not quite so mad a plan as Walter Bonham thought for the destruction of a mud wall, which his wife had put up despite his wishes, in such a way as not to arouse her suspicions.

And again :

Also about 2 or 3 years ago this deponent, coming another time to Henry May's house, May's wife requested him that he would use some persuasions to her husband for making of another well about the house for the cattle to drink at, because the grounds were so dry thereabouts. So this deponent, understanding by some that were there that Morgan or some other had persuaded Henry May that there was a commission granted to him and this deponent for the removing of certain trees between Wishford bridge and May's house at Elston, whereby the sea might be brought up to May's house, this deponent persuaded him saying :—' Cousin, you know there is a Commission granted to you and me for the digging up of those trees that the sea may be brought in hither to your house.' ' That's true,' quoth Henry May. Then quoth this deponent :—' But first every one in this village must make them two wells or else the salt water will spoil them. So Henry May was contented another well should be made. Otherwise, this deponent saith, he would have thrown in the earth again as fast as the workmen had cast it up.'

The idea of bringing the sea up to Salisbury was not so fantastic as, at first sight, appears, for schemes for making the Avon navigable from the sea to Salisbury were of very early date and Acts of Parliament with that object were actually passed in 1676 and 1677. A Commission of Sewers to regulate the river had been appointed in 1580, eighteen years before the date of this lawsuit, and it was perhaps their activities which suggested to Walter Bonham his ingenious scheme for inducing Henry May to dig an extra well.

Walter Bonham relates other instances of Henry May's eccentricities and adds that there were ' many other foolish toys and speeches which this deponent doth not now remember '.

He ends his deposition with a glowing eulogy of Henry May's wife, Ellinor, who ' has gained estimation and account

as well with the better sort, knights and those, as with them of the meaner sort '.

But enough has been quoted to show the quality of Walter Bonham's pen, the raciness of his style and his sense of humour. It seems a pity that, while he showed himself so competent and ingenious in managing Ellinor's husband for her, he failed so completely in managing his own affairs.

All that we know of Walter Bonham's wife is that her name was Mary ¹ and that he married her some time before 1574-5, when her name is coupled with his in a fine for the sale of the Laverstoke property. Her name, as well as that of their son and heir John, appears in all the documents relating to the mortgage of Great Wishford down to the year 1600. In the final undated renunciation of the property made by Walter from Goodwood, only the son's name appears, so that Mary perhaps died before the final crash.

The Wishford Register contains entries of the baptisms of at least three children born to them: 1576, 11 March, Elizabeth (M.2); 1577, 1 October, Caterine (M.3); 1579/80, 30 January, Swithin (M.4).

Of the daughters I have found no further mention. Of the son and heir John (M.1) the last mention I have found is in his father's final renunciation of Wishford about the year 1600. He was then living apparently with his father at Goodwood and after that he simply fades out of the picture. He was perhaps the 'John Bonham of New Sarum' who was buried at Great Wishford on 14 November 1608. In a document dated 1597 (Br. Mus. Add. Ch. 15,113) his father Walter Bonham styles himself 'of the city of New Sarum'.

Little more is known of Walter's brother and sisters, described by their father in his will as 'the residue of the family'.

Of Edward (L.3) we only know that Walter claimed that he had made a satisfactory arrangement with him as to his inheritance under his father's will. His name does not appear in the Wishford Register.

Of Thomas (L.4) we know rather more. Walter claims that he had granted to him, in fulfilment of the terms of his father's will, a lease for three lives of the farm in Wishford to which their mother and stepfather, Alice and Anthony Styleman, removed when they handed over the Manor to him. In making over the Wishford property to Grobham's representatives he expressly reserved his grant to Thomas

¹ A. T. Everitt says that she was Mary Skylling, daughter of Walter Skylling of Draycot.

Feet of Fines, 17
Eliz.

P.R.O. *Court of
Requests*, Wilts.,
Bundle 103, No. 66.

' for divers years yet enduring of the warren of coneys and of the herbage and pasture of the coppice called " Bonham bushes " and of the fishing from Wishford Bridge to Cobb's mill pond for the yearly rent of £10 '.

Thomas Bonham was apparently twice married, for the burial of his first wife on 3 June 1579 is recorded in the Wishford Register, followed, with indecent haste, by his marriage two months later, on 6 August, to Margaret Tydder. There is no record of any children by the first wife, but on 20 January 1587 a son Nicholas was baptized, followed on 29 January 1588 by another son named Thomas.

By 1622, Thomas (L.4) had migrated to Honington in Devonshire, for in that year he gives evidence in a suit brought by Sir Richard Grobham against one of his tenants and describes himself as of that place. He was then upwards of sixty years of age and states that his brother Walter was already dead. P.R.O. Town
Deposition, C. 24,
488 G.

Of Walter's sisters we get some scant information from the Wishford Register and elsewhere.

In 1560, on 8 July, Margery married Mr. George Eyre.

In 1577, on 21 October, Margaret married Mr. William Munday. In 1580, on 11 February, Mellior married Mr. William Lambert.

In 1577, on 16 April, an illegitimate child of Mary Bonham was baptized and named Edith. Its burial is recorded four days later on 20 April. It has been suggested that this Mary may have been the mysterious lady of the famous Littlecote legend, who was undoubtedly a Bonham. But though dates fit in well enough, it seems more likely that the unfortunate victim of Will Darrell was a member of the Hazelbury branch of the family. The question is fully discussed in my *History of the Manor of Hazelbury*.

Mary's pre-nuptial indiscretion does not seem to have spoiled her chances in the marriage market, for the Wishford Register records that on 24 February 1579/80 she married Robert Arnold and in the lawsuit which the sisters brought against their brother Walter in 1592 she is described as being the wife of Ambrose Pannell of Pirton, yeoman.

Anne, as we know from this same lawsuit, went further afield for a husband and married Matthew Glover of Moulton, Co. Northampton, yeoman. No mention is made in the lawsuit of any arrangement for the benefit of Frances, who had perhaps died earlier.

I have failed to discover anything about Walter's sons

John and Swithin,¹ or Thomas's sons Nicholas and Thomas, but that one of them had a descendant named Walter seems pretty certain, for in 1637 Robert Bower was appointed to the living of Great Wishford ' by William Bower of Lavington and Francis Topper of Combe Basset in virtue of the grant [ex concessione] made by Walter Bonham to John Bower and assigned by him to the aforesaid persons '.

John Bower was the previous incumbent and it is possible that the gift of the living was made over to him by Walter Bonham II in his lifetime, but the whole transaction is curious, for the advowson of the church is specifically mentioned in Queen Elizabeth's Letter Patent of 1600 as part of the property acquired by Richard Grobham.

Clearer evidence, however, as to the existence of a later Walter Bonham is afforded by Sir R. C. Hoare (*Modern Wiltshire*, Vol. I, p. 89), who refers to a deed dated 1665 by which ' Walter Bonham of Great Wishford, Wilts., granted a lease of Bonham House and Manor to Peter Pitney, who surrendered it to the Hon. Thomas Stourton '. Sir Richard Hoare states that the lease was in his possession, but I have searched for it in the muniment room at Stourhead in vain.

The late Lord Mowbray and Stourton, moreover, in his *History of the Noble Family of Stourton*, states that a Bonham still held the lordship of the Manor of Bonham down to the time of Thomas, 14th Baron Stourton, who purchased the fee of the Manor from him. This Baron Stourton was born in 1667, succeeded his brother in 1720 and died in 1743/4.

The elusive Samuel Bonham was born in 1677, so that he may well have been a son or grandson of one of these shadowy later Bonhams of Great Wishford, though I think it more probable, from his settling in Essex and his connexion with shipping and the sea, that he sprang from the Essex branch of the family.

I have already remarked that the Bonham family seemed to be subject to strange waves of inflation and collapse and that the close of the fifteenth century, with the creation of the Hazelbury and Essex branches, marked a period of inflation. The beginning of the seventeenth century marked equally clearly a period of collapse, for both the Wishford and Hazelbury branches came to grief at nearly the same time and in much the same way. While Walter Bonham of Wishford was wandering from place to place and trying to raise money and his sisters marrying husbands of the

¹ Sir R. C. Hoare refers to a lease of land at Bonham by Walter Bonham in 1605 attested by Swithin Bonham. The document was in his possession at Stourhead.

yeoman class, the last John Bonham of Hazelbury was mortgaging his estates and following exactly the same course. Wishford passed to the Grobhamms in 1600, when Hazelbury had already gone to the Youngs of Bristol in 1580.

Just as Walter of Wishford wandered out into the void with a son named John and was no more heard of, so the last John of Hazelbury and his son Thomas fade out of the picture and leave no trace behind.

The Essex branch of the family luckily escaped the infection and flourished for another 100 years. It is time now to turn to them and trace their fortunes.

PART II

BONHAMS OF ESSEX

CHAPTER I

FIRST APPEARANCE OF THE BONHAM NAME IN ESSEX

THE Bonham pedigree seems to have exercised a curious fascination on various people. Berry was in correspondence with members of the family on the subject in the eighteenth-fifties and Edward William Bonham of H.M. Consular Service, who died in 1896, spent the better part of a lifetime in collecting material for a family tree. He printed the results in a small undated volume for private circulation entitled: *Notes on the Pedigree of the family of Bonham of Essex*. His own copy of this work, which must now be becoming something of a rarity, is in my possession. It is heavily annotated and filled with corrections and additions in his own handwriting. His account of the descendants of Samuel Bonham, the mystery man who died in 1745/6, down to the date of his own death in 1896, is full and admirably clear and needs no comment. But he has gone astray occasionally in the earlier history of the family, often from following Morant and other writers, and I have been able, from further research into contemporary documents, to correct some errors, but his work is a monumental one without which these present notes could never have been written. He, like all the others, fails to trace the ancestry of Samuel Bonham, or to establish the connexion between the Wiltshire and the Essex Bonhams.

But the most surprising collection of material for a Bonham pedigree is to be found in the Portsmouth Public Library (R. 9743). It deals with the Bonham family from the earliest times, both in Wiltshire and Essex and in many other counties, and is especially rich in extracts from wills and entries in Parish Registers relating to the yeomen and other lesser fry of the family in Essex, Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire, etc. It was put together by the late Mr. R. T. Everitt, who must have been an expert genealogist

as well as an indefatigable worker. I came upon this valuable store of material by pure chance and why Mr. Everitt paid such special attention to the Bonham family I do not know, unless he was working in co-operation with or on behalf of Edward William Bonham.

The first puzzle is to establish the connexion between these Essex Bonhams and the Wiltshire Bonhams, whose history has already been dealt with. They bore the same arms, had contacts with Wiltshire and, in later generations, undoubtedly laid claim to Wiltshire ancestry. Were they descended from the great Wishford or from the Hazelbury branch of the family? Unfortunately I have so far been quite unable to solve the mystery. There are indications in both directions, for we find one of the Essex Bonhams in the reign of Henry VIII staying near Salisbury, which would seem to point to a possible connexion with Great Wishford, and yet the same man was also in close touch with Sir William Sharington of Lacock, who was a near neighbour and close friend of the Hazelbury branch. The missing link may yet be found, for Thomas Bonham of Stanway Hall in Essex, the founder of the Essex branch of the family, became, as we shall see presently, a great personage and Receiver of the Duchy of Lancaster, so that some clue to his origin may perhaps still turn up in the Duchy archives or elsewhere.

The second and more immediate problem is to connect up Samuel Bonham, the sea-captain and slave-dealer who died in 1744/5, with the Bonhams of Stanway Hall, and in putting together these notes, I have kept this end consistently in view.

Both branches of the Bonham family in Wiltshire, it will be remembered, had come to grief in the early years of the seventeenth century, and we must go back more than a hundred years for the first mention of the family in Essex. The earliest mention of that name that I have found occurs in an article by the late Sir Gurney Benham in the *Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society*, Vol. XIII, p. 82, where he quotes the proceedings of a Court held at Pete Hall for the Manors of West Mersea and Fingeringhoe 'in the XIIth year of King Henry VIIth by the advise and counsell of Thomas Bonham Esquier, then being steward of the said Lordshippes'. This would put the date of the holding of the Court in the year 1497. But Morant (Vol. I, p. 415, of the 1768 edition) gives the date of the same Court as 1520 and calls Thomas Bonham 'King's Steward'. This discrepancy of dates is of some importance in determining the

identity of the Thomas Bonham referred to. If 1497 be the correct date he may have been the father of Thomas Bonham of Stanway Hall, for, according to the Essex Visitations, the father also bore the name of Thomas, but if 1520 be correct then the reference is pretty certainly to Thomas Bonham of Stanway Hall himself. Harl. Soc., Vols. 13 and 14.

Now it will be noticed that while 1497 is the twelfth year of Henry VII, 1520 is the twelfth year of Henry VIII. I understand that there are in existence more than one copy of the document quoted by Sir Gurney Benham and that in one of these, made in about the year 1710 and in the possession of the Essex Record Office, the regnal year is written in full thus: 'in the 12th yeare of *King Henry ye seaventh*', while the calender year is given in figures at the end of the sentence as 1520. The more likely explanation seems to be that the copyist of 1710 misread the 'Henry VIII' of the original manuscript for 'Henry VII', that this 1710 copy was that used by Sir Gurney Benham for his article, that the true date was that given by Morant—1520—and that the Thomas Bonham referred to was Thomas Bonham of Stanway Hall and not his father.

This long technical discussion of a disputed date makes a dull opening to the family history in Essex, but I think it is of some importance as it concerns the date of the first appearance of the family in that county.

The accession of Henry VII is popularly supposed to mark the end of the Middle Ages, and it certainly marked the beginning of a period of much greater mobility in the population, a mobility which increased still more in the following reign with the distribution of the forfeited lands of the religious houses. Younger sons and country squires flocked to the Courts of the early Tudors to make their fortunes and lands were constantly changing hands and new families being founded. Several Wiltshire families turn up in Essex about this time, so that it is not surprising that Thomas was not the only Bonham who migrated to Essex from the former county. A William Bonham appears in Colchester in the reign of Henry VIII, and I propose to deal with him and his family in an Interlude before tackling the more important branch of Stanway Hall.

INTERLUDE A

WILLIAM BONHAM OF COLCHESTER: d. 1557

This William Bonham came somewhat later in date than Thomas of Stanway Hall, but he was not a son of the latter,

for we have a full list of Thomas's family. He may have been a brother and was pretty certainly a relation, and his residence at Colchester must have brought him into close touch with the Stanway Hall family, for Stanway Hall was near Colchester and Thomas moreover owned quite a considerable property in the town itself.

P.C.C. 37 Wrestley.

P.R.O. *Town
Depositions*, C. 24,
1. G.

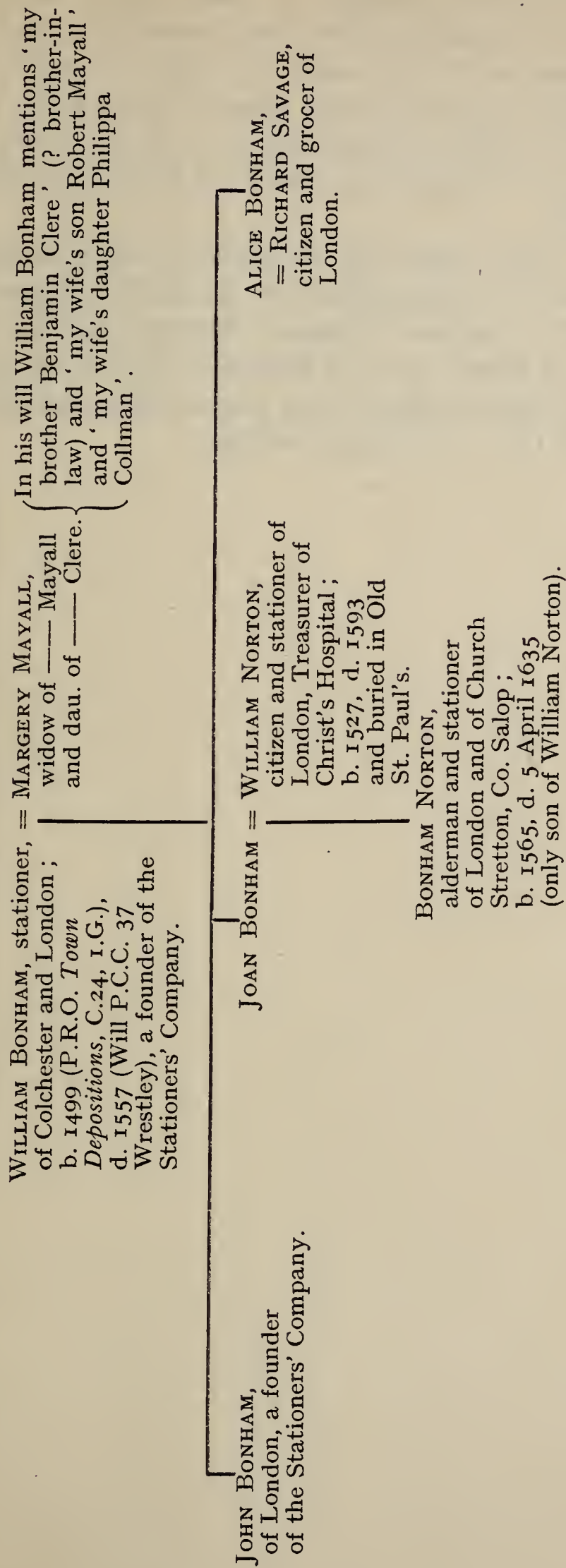
P.R.O. *Patent Rolls*,
1556, May 4.

Although William Bonham in his will, which was dated 4 July 1557 and proved 26 September of the same year, styles himself 'of Colchester', it is obvious that his real business lay in London, where he carried on the trade of a 'stationer', and in a document of 1537 he calls himself 'of London'. The Stationer's trade in those days included the printing and publishing of books and William Bonham's firm was evidently an important one, for in 1556 it was enacted by Queen Mary that 'seeing that seditious and heretical books are daily printed . . . a mystery or Art of Stationery' should be formed, and William Bonham's name is the first on the list of the freemen of the Company, a tribute presumably to his eminence in the trade as well as to his orthodox Catholicism. This 'Mystery or Art of Stationery' in due time became 'the Stationers' Company'. William had as his partners in the business his son John and his son-in-law William Norton, both of whom were also original freemen of the Company. His grandson Bonham Norton carried on the trade well into the seventeenth century and publications by the firm still occasionally appear in book sales to-day.

In his will William Bonham mentions his wife Margery, who had apparently been married before, for he makes bequests to her children Robert Mayall and Philippa Collman, and to his brother-in-law Benjamin Clere. But the most striking feature of the will is that he cuts out his son John from the succession altogether in favour of his two daughters, Joan, the wife of William Norton, and Alice, the wife of Richard Savage of London, grocer. No mention is made of any property in Essex, though the poor of Colchester are not forgotten, but there are lands, tenements, etc. at Cliff, Co. Kent, and tenements and gardens in the parishes of St. Allfild (? Alphege) and St. Olave in London. The property in Kent seems to have been quite a large one and the fact that this William Bonham owned property there may perhaps have led Morant and others to describe his neighbour Thomas Bonham of Stanway Hall as 'of Kent', though I cannot find from contemporary documents that Thomas Bonham had any connexion whatever with that county.

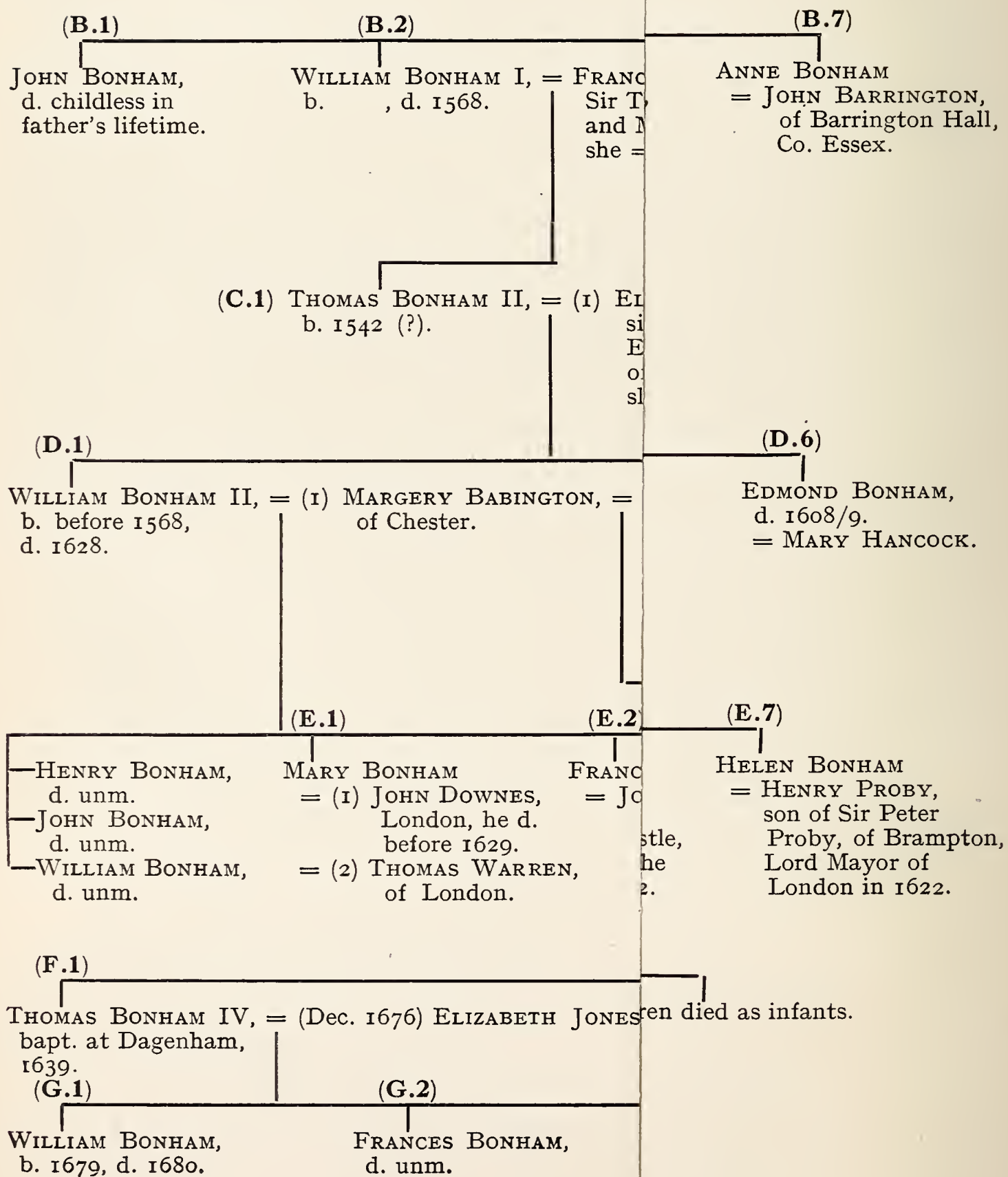
CHART IV

FAMILY OF WILLIAM BONHAM, THE STATIONER



William's son John Bonham is provided for by small annuities for life charged on these estates and a legacy of £20, but it is quite evident that he was in disgrace, for there is a clause in the will, none too kindly worded, stating that if he make any attempt to upset its provisions or otherwise dispute it, then his annuities are to be forfeited and the proceeds 'to be given in deeds of charity for the wealth of my soul'.

I have not been able to discover what became of John. He cannot be disregarded, for he may still prove to be the ancestor of Samuel Bonham through one or other of the groups of small yeomen Bonhams who crop up in various parts of Essex in the closing years of the sixteenth and early years of the seventeenth century.



CHAPTER II

BONHAMS OF STANWAY HALL

(For ease of reference each generation of the family is marked in the pedigree chart with a separate letter of the alphabet, beginning with A, and to each member of a generation the appropriate number is attached.)

GENERATION A

(A.1) THOMAS BONHAM I OF STANWAY HALL: b. ?; m., between 1501 and 1509, Katherine, dau. of the 1st Lord Marney and widow of Edward Knivett; d. 18 June 1532

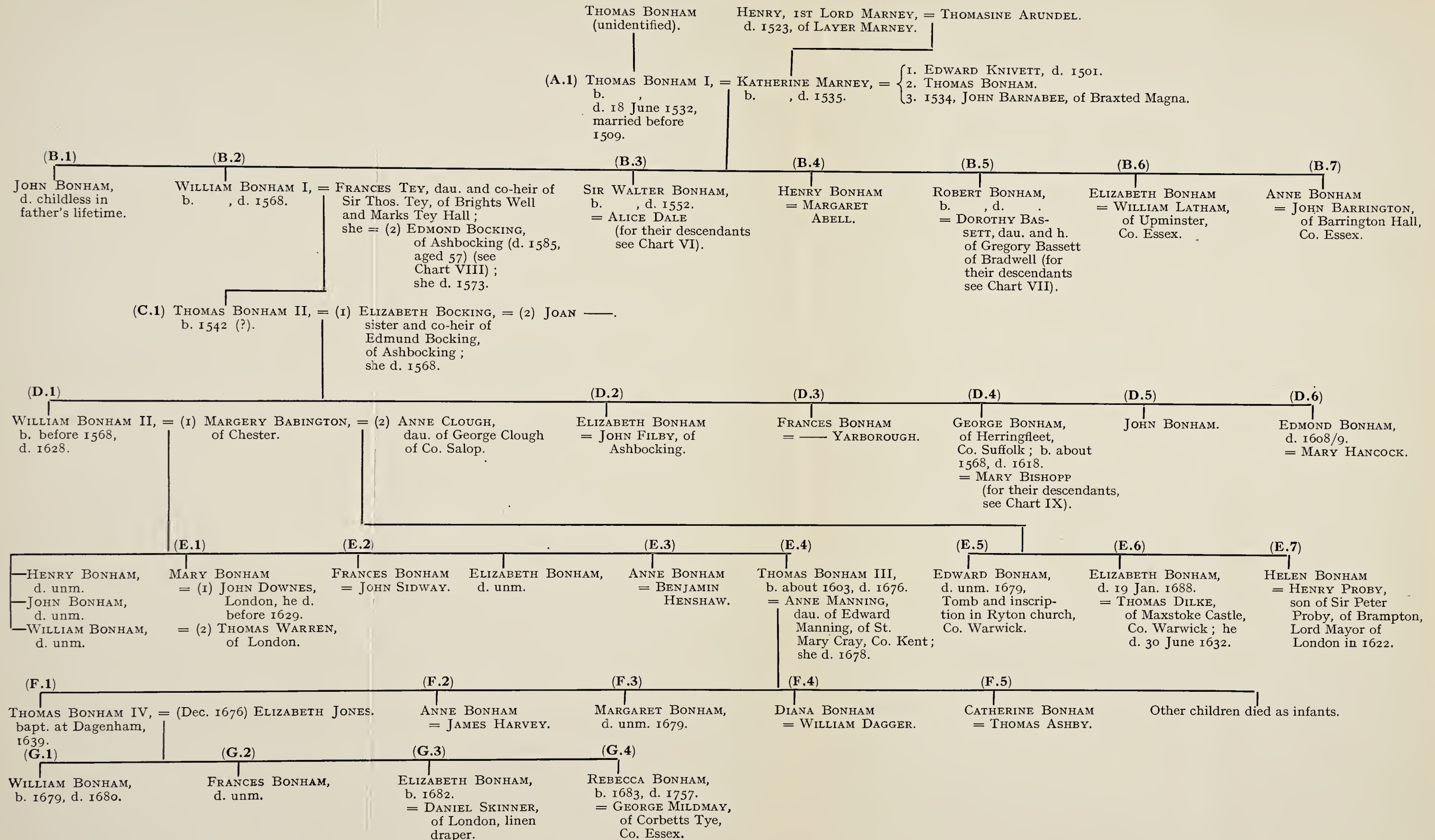
THOMAS BONHAM OF STANWAY HALL was a much more important personage than William the Stationer and a typical product of his age—enterprising, acquisitive and, probably, none too scrupulous. Whatever his origin may have been he feathered his own nest very comfortably.

E. W. Bonham in his pedigree of the Bonham family deals very fully with this man and enumerates the various offices which he held, so that only the more important of these need be mentioned here. According to the Essex Visitations he was the son of another Thomas, but I have found no other mention of the father and have not been able to identify him. I can find no place for this elder Thomas in the Hazelbury branch of the Wiltshire Bonhams, but, as I have already pointed out in my notes on the Wiltshire Bonhams, he may quite well have been a member of the Great Wishford branch and, so far as dates go, may even have been one of the famous seven-at-a-birth, for the heroine of that episode, Edith, the wife of Thomas Bonham, II of Great Wishford, was married in 1440, gave birth to her first son William in 1449 and died in 1469, so that the famous seven, whether produced wholesale or retail, must have been born after 1449, a date which would fit very well for the elder Thomas, the father of Thomas Bonham of Stanway Hall. But this of course is pure speculation.

I have already mentioned that Morant speaks of Thomas Bonham of Stanway Hall as 'of Kent', that in the Pardon Roll of Henry VIII (1509/10) he is styled 'late of London'

CHART V

STANWAY HALL BONHAMS



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Gairdner's *Letters and papers of the reign of Henry VIII*, 22 May 1509, and 1520.

and it is evident, from the nature of some of the offices which he held, that he must have spent a good deal of his time in the capital, where he had an office and owned considerable property. On the accession of Henry VIII he rose rapidly and in the first year of the reign was granted, with one Richard Decons, in survivorship the office of Keeper of Writs and Rolls of the Common Pleas, which he was still holding in 1520. He was already married in 1509, for his wife Katherine is mentioned by name in the Pardon Roll issued by Henry VIII on his accession in 1509. His marriage probably had a good deal to do with his success in life, for his wife was a rich widow and a daughter of a great house. She was Katherine, daughter of Sir Henry Marney, 1st Lord Marney of Layer Marney, a Knight of the Garter and Privy Councillor. Her father was the builder of Layer Marney, one of the most magnificent early Tudor buildings in England, and his tomb and that of his son in the church there are among the most beautiful Renaissance monuments in the country. She had married as her first husband, Edward Knivett, who had died in 1501.

There is a curious double connexion with Wiltshire here, for Katherine's father, Lord Marney, was steward of the Manor of Mere, which is close to Bonham and the country of the Wishford branch of the Bonham family, while a member of the Knivett family, Sir Henry Knivett, a little later married the daughter of Sir James Stumpe, the famous clothier of Malmesbury, and lived at Charlton near Hazelbury and had dealings with the Hazelbury Bonhams, notably in the matter of the 'Littlecote Mystery' (see my *History of the Manor of Hazelbury*). I have not discovered what relation this Sir Henry Knivett was to Edward Knivett, Katherine's first husband.

P.R.O., his Inquest p.m., *Chancery Inq. p.m.*, Series II, File 55, No. 1.

With his wife Katherine Thomas Bonham acquired a half share of the Manor of Stanway, near Colchester, which had belonged to her late husband, Edward Knivett. He acquired the other half by purchase and Stanway Hall now became the residence of the family. Here again the Bonham talent for falling in pleasant places shows itself, for Stanway Hall on its steep wooded slope, with the ruins of its ancient church, is to-day almost like a piece of Wiltshire transported into the flatter and more monotonous Essex landscape.

Gairdner's *Letters*, etc.

In 1519 Thomas Bonham was holding the important office of Receiver General of the Duchy of Lancaster, which he continued to hold till his death in 1532. He was Sheriff for Essex in 1520, 1525 and 1526, and Knight of the Shire for that county in 1529. Innumerable commissions were

issued to him for various works in the county, including that of Commissioner of the Peace almost constantly from 1510 to 1532. In 1530 he was one of the Commissioners appointed to make inquisition into the property in Essex of the attainted Cardinal Wolsey. In this connexion he is mentioned in a curious letter from Thomas Russhe to Thomas Cromwell published in Gairdner's *Letters and Papers of the Reign of Henry VIII*, dated 29 December 1529. His name not infrequently occurs in these letters, often in conjunction with that of the Audeley brothers.

Thomas Bonham, 'after a time of sickness in the Inner Temple', died on 18 June 1532 'at the house of one Mr. Polyver in Fleet St.' His Inquest post mortem is a very long and curious document. He possessed no inherited lands, but, in the course of years, had put together by purchase a considerable estate. He had increased the Stanway Hall property by buying up several small blocks of land in the neighbourhood, and he owned house property and a shop with the sign of the White Hart in Colchester and lands in the suburb of Lexden. But he did not confine these activities to his own immediate neighbourhood, and at the time of his death he owned properties in the Tolleshunts, the Teys and Copford, Great and Little Bentley, Alresford, Langenhoe, and as far away as Rawreth and Thundersley, all obtained by the same system of buying up small plots of a few acres from various owners. In later generations families of the name of Bonham, generally small yeomen or husbandmen, are found at several of these places, notably at Benfleet and Thundersley. This may have been pure chance, but it may of course have quite another significance.

P.R.O., Chancery
Inq. p.m., Series II,
File 55, No. 1.

Thomas and Katherine Bonham's family consisted of five sons—John, William, Walter, Henry and Robert—and two daughters—Elizabeth and Anne.

The eldest son, John, apparently died childless in his father's lifetime. The daughters Elizabeth and Anne were married respectively to William Latham of Upminster, Co. Essex, and John Barrington of Barrington Hall, Co. Essex. In characteristic Tudor fashion Thomas Bonham provided for his four surviving sons during his lifetime by acquiring the wardship of four rich heiresses, whom he allotted to them in his will. At the time of his death all these sons were under age, but the marriages, with the exception possibly of that of his son Henry, all took place in accordance with his plans.

Thomas's widow, Katherine, two years after her second husband's death, married as her third husband John Barna-

Col. Chester's
Excerpts from
Marriage Licences,
1887.

bee of Braxted Magma. She cannot have been very young, for she had had a daughter by her first husband, Edward Knivett, who died in 1501, and seven children by her second husband, Thomas Bonham; but matrimony in Tudor times was ruled by policy rather than by sentiment and a well-dowered widow seems never to have found much difficulty in finding a husband. But her third marriage in 1534 did not last for long, for she died in 1535, when her half share of the Manor of Stanway passed back to the heirs of her first husband, Edward Knivett.

As so often happens a later lawsuit (of 1554) gives us some amusing pictures of Thomas and Katherine's family life at Stanway Hall, but this document must be dealt with in its proper place later on and we must now pass to the next generation.

GENERATION B

(B.1) JOHN BONHAM: d. childless and under age in the lifetime of his father

JOHN BONHAM, the eldest son and heir, is referred to as such in the will of his maternal grandfather, Henry, first Lord Marney, who died in 1523, so that he was still alive at that date, but he is not mentioned in his father's will and in the Essex Visitation of 1634 he is stated to have died childless.

(B.2) WILLIAM BONHAM: b. ?; m. Frances Tey; d. 1568

William Bonham, the second son of Thomas Bonham I and Katherine, became the heir on his father's death in 1532. Thomas Bonham had left to his widow Katherine for life, with remainder to William, all his Stanway, Lexden and Colchester property and on her death in 1535 the moiety of the Manor of Stanway, which she held in her own right, passed, as already stated, to the Cloptons, the heirs of her first husband Edward Knivett. The other moiety of the Manor, which his father had purchased, now became the property of William. William Bonham and Francis Clopton presented jointly to the living of Stanway in 1542.

Morant's *Essex*.

William duly married the heiress allotted to him in his father's will—Frances, daughter and co-heir of Sir Thomas Tey, knight, of Brightswell and Marks Tey Hall. She was the youngest of the four daughters and co-heiresses of Sir Thomas and brought to her husband the Manor of Brightswell (or Bradvills).

William is rather a nebulous person and we know very little about him. He was under age when his father died in 1532, but he must have married Frances Tey before 1542, for in that year the moiety of the Manor of Stanway was settled on them for life, with remainder to their son Thomas. This settlement was probably made on the birth of Thomas, their son and heir.

In 1544 there is a curious entry in 'Acts not on the Parliamentary Roll and not printed in the Statutes at large'. The preamble states that Henry VIII 'this winter last past hath had divers and many of his ships royal lying and remaining in his haven and water called Colne in the said county of Essex, which is more meet for them than any place heretofore found', and therefore he intends to have much of his navy remain there in future 'and the manor of Peldon, lying thereby, is convenient for him'. Consequently an exchange was to be affected between the King and William Bonham and Frances his wife; the King to have the Bonhams' Manor and advowson of the church of Peldon, Essex, and the Bonhams the Manor of Boyvylles in Ardeley, Essex, and the moiety of the Manor and church of Much Stanway.

Gairdner's Letters etc., 1544.

The Manor of Peldon was presumably part of Frances' inheritance, but how the King came to have at his disposal a half of the Manor of Stanway is not explained. I do not know whether the exchange scheme was ever carried out, but it looks as if the Bonham couple insisted on a payment in cash, for in the following year (1545) there is a note of a payment to the Bonhams, by virtue of the King's warrant, of £680 for the Manor. In a grant of this same Manor by Edward VI in 1551 to Thomas Darcy it is stated that it was 'late parcil of the lands of William Bonham'.

Gairdner.

P.R.O., Calendar of Patent Rolls, Ed. VI, Vol. IV, p. 136.

William Bonham was a Commissioner for the muster in Essex in 1546 and may possibly be identical with the person of that name who was a gentleman pensioner of the Royal Household in 1545. He is said to have lived till 1568.

Gairdner.

In the Visitation of 1634 William and Frances are credited with one child only, a son named Thomas, who will be dealt with as head of the next generation. The Visitations are not always reliable as to the number of children and there may possibly have been others, but I have not been able to trace any.

The widow Frances married as her second husband Edmund Bocking of Ashbocking, Co. Suffolk. This marriage was one of those business transactions with an eye to family property that were so common in Tudor times, but it steered

so close to the prohibited degrees and was so improbable that it has led both Morant and E. W. Bonham sadly astray. The story of this amazing marriage, however, belongs properly to a later period in our history and will be dealt with in due course.

YOUNGER MEMBERS OF GENERATION B

MORE space has been given to the younger members of this generation than was perhaps necessary, but more is known about them than about their rather shadowy eldest brother William, and the records of the younger brothers are interesting and sometimes amusing.

(B.3) SIR WALTER BONHAM: b. ?; m. Alice Dale; d. 1552

Walter Bonham duly married the heiress appointed for him in his father's will, Alice Dale, daughter and heiress of William Dale. His father had obtained the wardship of this heiress in 1522, the grant being so worded that if she died during her minority he was to have the wardship of the next heir, her uncle, William Dale. Old Thomas Bonham (A.1) was taking no chances. In 1538 livery was granted to Walter and Alice Bonham of all the possessions of her late father in England and Wales. But Alice's uncle William Dale, the next heir, apparently put in a claim, for in 1542 he instituted a suit against Walter Bonham, who pleads as one of the King's Highness' pensioners that 'forasmuch as the said Walter was commanded to give continued attendance upon the King's Highness, he was unable to attend the court at Odiham in the date appointed'. The hearing was accordingly postponed and I have never succeeded in finding out whether it was ever renewed or whether Walter's rather thin excuse effectually put an end to all further proceedings.

*Acts of the Privy
Council 1542.*

Alice Bonham (Dale) among her other property, had a life interest in the Manor of Soberton in the Meon valley in Hampshire. Old Thomas Bonham, as her guardian, had let this property during her minority to Lord Lyle, the Governor of Calais, and the Lyles were now anxious, on Alice's succession, either to renew their lease or to get compensation for being turned out. There is a long and amusing correspondence on the subject between Lady Lyle and her agent in England, John Hussey, in Gairdner's *Letters and Papers of the Reign of Henry VIII*, extending from 1535 to 1540. Walter Bonham seems to have been an elusive

young man and Hussey spent much of his time in hunting for him and trying to bring him to the point ; at one time he reports that he is in Calais and on 23 February 1538 he says that ' if he is to see Mr. Bonham he must ride to Salisbury, within 3 miles of which he lies '. Does this perhaps indicate a visit by Walter to Great Wishford, the seat of the main branch of the Wiltshire Bonhams, which is only a little more than three miles from Salisbury ? In the same year Hussey writes that Alice Bonham is still under age and has no children, and describes Walter Bonham as ' a goodly young man and a gentle '.

But Walter was a soldier as well as a courtier and served in the Scottish war, where he so distinguished himself at the battle of Pinkie on 10 September 1547 that he was knighted by the Protector Somerset at Newcastle on the 1 October following. It will be remembered that the making of knights on his own responsibility was one of the offences with which the Protector was afterwards charged. It is also recorded of Walter Bonham that it was he who was responsible for removing the lead from the roof of the chapel of Holyrood House when the English troops entered Edinburgh in 1547, but I have unfortunately mislaid my reference for this incident.

A Book of Knights,
by W. C. Metcalfe,
1885.

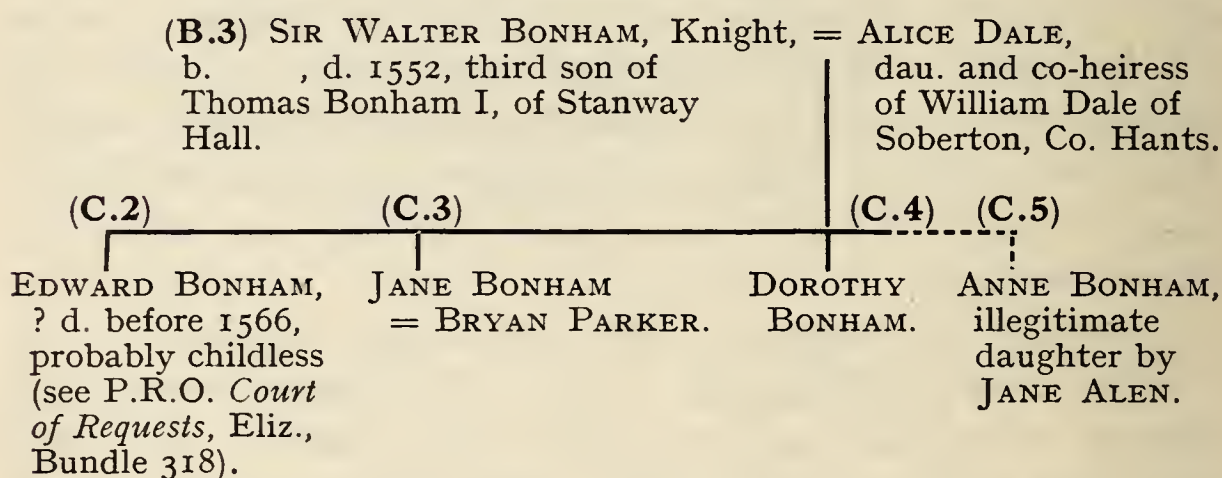
I have already suggested that Sir Walter may have been in touch with the Bonhams of Great Wishford ; there is an indication that he may also have had relations with the Hazelbury branch of the family, for he was evidently a close friend of Sir William Sharrington, the near neighbour and intimate of Sir John Bonham of Hazelbury (see my *History of the Manor of Hazelbury*). Sir Walter and Sharrington had joint dealings with the famous Sir John Gresham, who at one time owed them jointly 1,000 marks. Sharrington, moreover, was one of the executors of Sir Walter's will and it was in Sharrington's house in Hackney that he died in 1552. He held this house on lease from its owner and all the furniture and other contents belonged to him. We have a complete inventory of all his possessions when he died—the furniture and other appointments room by room throughout the house, the contents of his wardrobe, his arms and armour, his jewels and silver and all the debts owing to and due by him. A copy of this most interesting document will be found in the appendix. It mentions a sum of £14 6s. 0d. due to ' Edward Bonham of London, Mercer, for silks, cloth, ready money etc.' This Edward Bonham must certainly have been a relation, but unfortunately I have so far been unable to place him.

P.R.O. *Catalogue of Ancient Deeds*, Vol. V., A 13121, p. 449.

P.C.C. 32 Burke.

From his will dated 1552 we know that Sir Walter had three legitimate children, Edward, Jane and Dorothy, and the prospect of a posthumous child by one Jane Alen. Jane Alen was to receive the profits of his estate 'so long as she continued soule and unmarried'. If she died or married the property was to be divided between 'Edward Bonham, my son, Jane Bonham and Dorothy Bonham, my daughters, and that child that Jane Alen is now with child with.' If all the children died his brother Robert Bonham of Bradwell (B.5, of whom presently) was to be his heir. No mention is made in the will of his wife Alice (Dale) and she was probably dead, but the three legitimate children were presumably hers. The eldest of them must have been under fourteen years of age when their father died in 1552, for Hussey tells us that Alice was still childless in 1538.

CHART VI



P.R.O. Court of
Requests, Eliz.,
Bundle 318.

In 1566, fourteen years after their father's death, we get further news of the family, for in that year one Bryan Parker, who had married Jane, Sir Walter's elder legitimate daughter, complains in his own name and in that of his wife, and of her two sisters, Dorothy and Anne Bonham, 'daughters of Sir Walter Bonham', that the executors of their father's will, Sir William Sharington and Thomas Wattes, had never carried out its provisions. Anne Bonham was evidently the posthumous child born to Sir Walter by Jane Alen.

The document is unfortunately much damaged by water and mice and large parts of it are quite illegible, but we can glean a few interesting facts from it. The property which, the daughters complain, has been withheld from them is the Manor of Litton or Lytton in Yorkshire and 'a great chain weighing 17 ounces of pure gold', doubtless that same chain which figures in Sir Walter's inventory. How Sir Walter came to own a manor in Yorkshire or where it was situated I have not discovered. But the most significant

point in the document is that, whereas it is expressly stated in it that Edward Bonham was bequeathed an equal share with his sisters in the property, his name is not associated with theirs in the petition. The natural supposition is that he had died childless in the meantime. No statement that he had so died can be found in the legible part of the document, but so much of it is indecipherable that such a statement may well be there. The point is of some importance, for Edward, if he did survive until manhood, might very possibly have been the ancestor of Samuel Bonham.

(B.4) HENRY BONHAM

Of Henry Bonham, the third surviving brother, I have discovered practically nothing. He was under age when his father died in 1532 and the heiress allotted to him in his father's will was Margaret Abell. He was also to inherit all his father's 'manors, lands etc. in Middlesex and London', but the situation and extent of these is not further indicated.

He may have been the Henry Bonham who was serving with seventy-two men under Sir Thomas Poynings in Basse Boulogne in 1544. *Gairdner's Letters, etc.*

It is all very vague. We do not even know whether he ever married the bride allotted to him in his father's will, where she is simply styled 'Margaret Abell, my ward', and no indication of her parentage is given. According to Morant the Abell family 'were originally considerable clothiers'. The name does not seem to occur in earlier Essex records, but one John Abell, who died on 10 January 1523/4, held lands at Fordham, West Mersea and Lexden, and was thus a near neighbour of old Thomas Bonham of Stanway Hall. Margaret was perhaps a daughter of his, but she was certainly not his heir, for in his Inquisition post mortem his heir is said to be his son, Thomas Abell, described as 'clerk' and aged thirty.

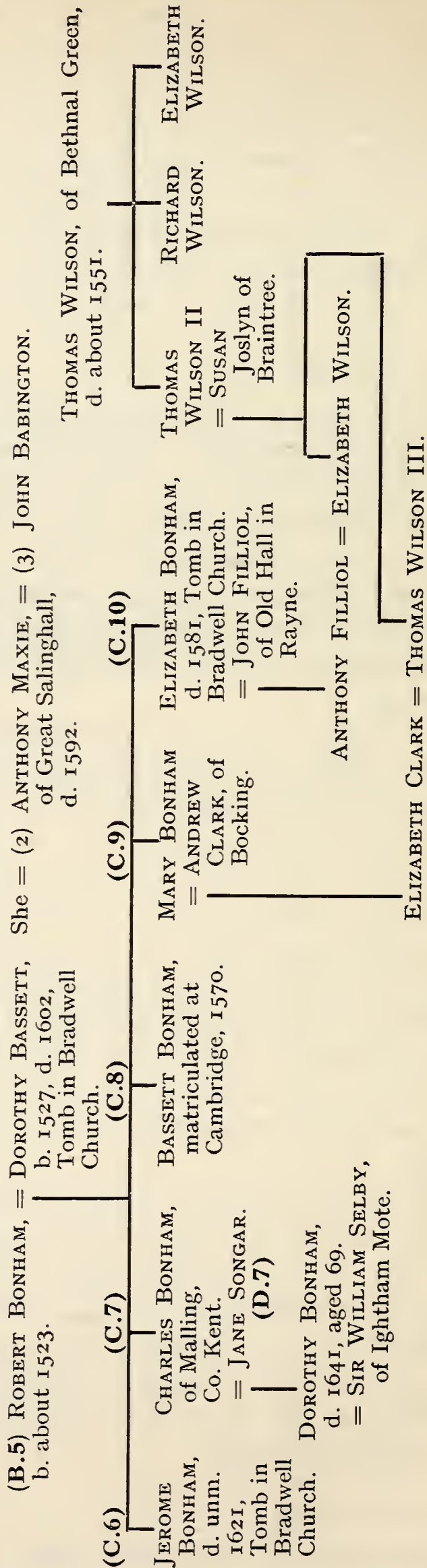
I can find no record of Henry Bonham holding any lands in Essex, either in his own name or in right of his wife. As his father left him his London property he may perhaps have taken up his residence in London, but I have so far found no mention of him in family wills, lawsuits, etc. If he lived to marry, whether Margaret Abell or another, and to rear a family, he also must be reckoned as a possible ancestor of Samuel Bonham.

(B.5) ROBERT BONHAM

Of Robert Bonham, the youngest brother, we have much fuller information. He seems to have been a turbulent

CHART VII

FAMILY OF ROBERT BONHAM AND DOROTHY BASSETT



Compiled from various funeral monuments and from P.R.O. *Chancery Proceedings*, C.2, Elizabeth, W. 14/32.

young man and was also much engaged in lawsuits. The bride appointed for him was Dorothy Bassett, only daughter and heir of Gregory Bassett, who had died in 1528. She brought with her the estate of Bradwell and, if the stories as to her treatment of her Bonham children are true, seems to have been a not very pleasant character. Robert had inherited from his father a small property at Abberton, south of Colchester, but his wife's estates at Bradwell, between Braintree and Colchester, were much more important and the couple established themselves there. Morant says that old Thomas Bonham (A.1) 'procured her to be married very young to his son Robert', but this cannot be, for old Thomas, in his usual authoritative way, lays it down in his will that his son Robert is to marry his ward Dorothy Bassett. Moreover, Dorothy was only five years old and Robert only nine when old Sir Thomas Bonham died in 1532. It was not till 1544 that Robert and Dorothy were granted livery of her father's lands. (In the original grant the father is wrongly named 'George', corrected to 'Gregory' in an amended grant of the following year.)

All the information that I have about Robert tends to show that he must have been rather a violent person.

On 4 April 1546, he was summoned before the Privy Council at Greenwich 'for the striking of a priest at Witham (not far from his wife's Bradwell estate) and evil behaving of himself in that act', and was committed to the Fleet prison. He is referred to in the entry as 'the youngest brother of the Bonhams', which shows that the family was well known about the Court. A week later he was released

*P.R.O. Acts of the
Privy Council, 1546.*

after admonition given unto him for his better behaviour hereafter, and, to the end some penalty might make him the warer to attempt any like deed, it was awarded he should forthwith pay unto the priest for a recompense of his hurt 5 marks and to the King's Majesty by way of a fine three pounds.

And further 'John Maxie and Reginald Hollingworth, gentlemen, were either of them bound in one hundred pounds sterling by recognizance' for his good behaviour till the next midsummer term. This John Maxie was the father of the Anthony Maxey who later married Robert's widow.

In the reign of Philip and Mary he is again in trouble, for in 1556/7 one Thomas Culpeper brings an action against him in the Star Chamber. The dispute relates to his wife's rights in the Manors of Kelveden and Ewell and he is accused of taking the law into his own hands and carrying off 300

*P.R.O. Star Chamber
Proceedings, Ph. and
Mary, Bundle 6,
No. 29.*

loads of wood belonging to the complainant. It is alleged that he came with a number of other persons, including husbandmen, yeomen, 'brykelayers', etc. to the number of thirty-six or thereabouts, armed with 'swords, bucklers, bills, staves, daggers, sherhowks (? shearing hooks) and other weapons, as well invasive as defensive', and made forcible entry into the two manors and carried off the timber. Robert's only reply is that there was no riotous assembly and that the Star Chamber had no jurisdiction in the matter.

P.R.O. *Star Chamber
Proceedings, Essex,
Bundle 4, No. 11.*

A rather similar case had occurred two years before, in 1554, when one William Sapurton accused Robert Bonham of battery and assault. I have kept it to the last, as it is an invaluable document for the family history and gives an amusing glimpse of the family life of old Thomas Bonham (A.1) at Stanway Hall. The dispute itself was a trumpery one and turned on the exact age of Robert Bonham when he granted certain leases on another of his wife's properties known as Piggott's Manor in Rayne and Great Saling, near Braintree. (Incidentally, one of the lessees was that same John Maxie who had given security for Robert after his assault on the priest, and his other security on that occasion, Reginald Hollingworth, now also gave evidence on his behalf.)

But Robert Bonham again resorted to violence and Sapurton declares that he and others came 'in riotous manner, that is to say with swords, bills and staves' and forcibly entered the Manor and

did then and there strike your said subject, giving him divers blows and stripes, and plucked the hair from his head and beard and put him in fear and jeopardy of his life, so that for fear of manslaughter he was compelled to forgo his possession.

Robert Bonham's reply is picturesque, if not convincing. He says that he and his servant had only their swords and bucklers and adds contemptuously that Sapurton tried to get over a stile into his (Bonham's) land and that

he wrought after him and took him by the coat to pull him back and, for that he had on a great pair of hedging gloves, he could not well fasten on his coat and so stepped near to him and took him by the bosom and, in the pulling of him, he fastened on his beard and, as he supposeth, some of the hair thereof fell therewithal, but the said complainant, that notwithstanding, passed on the said stile.

But it is the evidence as to Robert Bonham's exact age which is the important part of the case.

Dame Elizabeth Barrington, the mother of John Barrington, who had married Robert Bonham's sister Anne, is the first witness. She tells how about twenty-eight years before she had been on a visit to old Thomas Bonham of Stanway Hall and that

Robert at that time could well go about the house without help or stay and at dinner did sit at the table of his mother and could call for any meat that he list to eat of by name and by the supposing of the said deponent and saying of his mother, he was at that time about three years old.

She gives a full list of all the members of the family, including the eldest son John (B.1), who died in his father's lifetime, and adds that when her son had married Robert's sister Anne the then Lord Marney (according to another witness, John, 2nd Lord Marney, the bride's uncle, not her grandfather, the 1st Lord Marney) had approved the marriage and promised his support and protection.

Emlyn Badby of Layer Marney, who had the charge of Thomas's other daughter Elizabeth (afterwards married to William Latham), gives similar evidence and says that she was often with the Bonham family, both at Stanway Hall and at Layer Marney, and other servants tell how they often carried Robert about in their arms when he was a small child. The 'youngest of the Bonham brothers' seems in fact to have been rather spoilt when he was small, which perhaps accounts for the violence of his character in later life.

Henry Northey of St. Martin's le Grand, gentleman, who was one of Thomas Bonham's clerks in his office of the Receivership of the Duchy of Lancaster and was with him when he died in London in 1532, states that he was requested by Thomas's widow Katherine to stay on as her servant and was sent, before the Michaelmas following Thomas's death, to fetch the little Robert back from school at Colchester, where he was being educated in the house of the Crutched Friars :

He doth esteem the said Robert to be at the time of his father's decease of the age of 9 years full, for that he was not only able to ride a horse alone, but was then able to rule, order and guide his horse, both in the way and watering places, being 6 or 7 miles distant. And further saith that he was then of such towardness in wisdom of that age, more like a man than a boy. And in the same meantime, between the departure of his said father and Michaelmas next after, this deponent knew him to kill a coney with his long bow. And so this

deponent judgeth him to be then of nine years of age full at the least.

But there was written as well as oral evidence. An old mass-book was produced, in which the names of all the children of Thomas Bonham had been entered—an early instance surely of the keeping of a Family Bible. The book produced in Court had been missing for some time and the prosecution apparently suggested that it was a fake, manufactured for the occasion. Its history gave rise to much hard and contradictory swearing on either side. William Cony, an aged priest, says that he had been curate of Great Stanway fifteen years ago and had been used to say Mass at the altar on the book and had often read the family entries in it. In the previous autumn, as he was walking in the church, he had seen a carter from Wick's Tey enter the church and 'rend in pieces' a book which he had found there. The carter then took the mass-book

and would have done the like with the same if this jurate had not rebuked him for his evil doing. Whereupon the said carter hurled the mass-book into the font and went his way. And when he was gone this jurate bestowed the said book in a hole under Our Lady altar in the said church, to and for that end and purpose that it should not be destroyed and torn as the other book was.

The incident is a curious one and rings true. The carter was perhaps a puritan fanatic, bent on the destruction of popish books.

When the present case came on search for the missing mass-book was made in the church and 'after sundry corners sought out' one Thomas Cole 'put his arm into an hole under Our Lady altar there and pulled forth the said mass-book'.

There was then much dispute as to the hand-writing of the entries in the book, some saying that it was that of a former prior of the house of Crutched Friars at Colchester who used to say mass at Stanway Church, others that it was that of Thomas Bonham himself. Some witnesses say that the book was kept in the church, but one says that 'it was wont to lie in the parlour window at Stanway in the lifetime of Thomas Bonham', and another that he 'did find the said book cast aside amongst other old books near the cupboard in the parlour at Stanway Hall'.

A pleasant personal touch is given by a former servant, who says that he knows the writing is that of Thomas Bonham, 'for that Thomas Bonham did teach this deponent to write and to shape his letters after such form as he himself

wrote'. It shows a kindness which one would scarcely have suspected from the rather hard bargainings and grasping foresight which characterize old Thomas Bonham in most of his doings.

What the result of the case was I do not know, but its only importance lies in the very full particulars which it gives of old Thomas Bonham's family and in the lively sketches which it affords of the life at Stanway Hall in the sixteenth century.

Robert Bonham and Dorothy Bassett are credited in Essex Visitations and by Morant and E. W. Bonham with a family of two sons, Jerome (or Jeremy) and Charles, and two daughters, Mary and Elizabeth, but I think there may have been a third son named Bassett after his mother, for when Jeremy Bonham matriculated from Peterhouse, Cambridge, at Michaelmas 1570, a 'Basset' Bonham matriculated from the same college. They must surely have been brothers, but we hear no more of Bassett Bonham and he probably died young.

*Venn's Alumni
Cantabrigienses.*

Jerome (or Jeremy) Bonham, the eldest son of Robert and Dorothy Bonham, never married, though at one time, as will be seen later, he seems to have had a narrow escape from that fate. He lived till 1621, when he was buried in Bradwell Church, where his monumental inscription can still be seen.

Charles Bonham, who styles himself of Malling, Co. Kent, married Jane, daughter of Gilbert Songar of Co. Essex, and they had an only daughter named Dorothy, who married Sir William Selby of Ightham Mote, a famous old house in Co. Kent. Dorothy Selby died in 1641 at the age of 69 and there is an extraordinary monument to her memory in Ightham Church, executed by the well-known Sculptor Edward Marshall and mentioned by John Aubrey. It is an elaborate anti-Papal allegory introducing the figure of Guy Fawkes and the word 'November' written over the door of the Houses of Parliament, thrown open to reveal the barrels of gunpowder within. The tradition in the Selby family is that it was Dorothy Selby who suggested to Lord Monteagle the true meaning of the letter warning him to keep away from the Parliament on 5 November, and that she was thus instrumental in frustrating the Gunpowder Plot.

Of the two daughters of Robert Bonham and Dorothy (Bassett), Elizabeth married John Filiol of Old Hall in Rayne. She died in 1581 and is buried next her brother Jerome in Bradwell church.

Thos. Wilson's brass
in Braintree Church.

P.R.O. *Chancery
Proceedings*, C.2,
Eliz., W. 14/32.

Mary married Andrew Clark of Bocking and their only daughter Elizabeth Clark married Thomas Wilson.

In 1598/9 there was a curious lawsuit among members of the Wilson family in which the name of Jerome or Jeremy Bonham crops up.

There were three generations of the Wilson family in which the eldest son bore the name of Thomas. The first Thomas Wilson is styled 'of Bethnal Green'. (Morant says that the Wilsons were wealthy London brewers but gets confused, I think, by the multiplicity of Thomases and calls the first Wilson 'William' and misses out entirely the first Thomas.) This first Thomas Wilson died about 1590, making his eldest son and heir, the second Thomas Wilson, his executor and leaving certain property near Charing Cross and in Whitechapel to his younger son Richard and £400 to his daughter Elizabeth. The second Thomas Wilson, who had married Susan Joslyn of Braintree, died shortly after his father and made his widow Susan his executrix. Richard and Elizabeth Wilson now brought an action against their sister-in-law Susan, Jeremy Bonham and one Jeffrey Brocke, alleging that Susan had got all the deeds relating to their inheritance into her hands, disclosed them to others, enabling them to raise claims on the land, and, moreover, that she was making arrangements to marry, if indeed she had not already married, Jeremy Bonham 'to their utter undoing'. They add that the couple will soon be bankrupt and that Elizabeth's legacy of £400 will be lost beyond recovery.

Brass of Thos. Wilson
III, in Braintree
Church.

The inwardness of this lawsuit is obscure, but I think there can be little doubt that the Jeremy Bonham at whom the widow Susan Wilson was setting her cap was in fact our bachelor Jerome (C.6), the eldest son of Robert Bonham and Dorothy Bassett, for though she did not succeed in catching him she did marry off her son, the third Thomas Wilson, to his niece Elizabeth Clark, the daughter of his sister Mary, and her daughter Elizabeth to Anthony Filliol, his nephew, the son of his other sister Elizabeth.

This rather involved account of the descendants of Robert Bonham and Dorothy Bassett may seem unnecessary, but it shows that, with the possible but very improbable exception of Bassett Bonham, none of them can possibly have been the legitimate ancestor of Samuel.

I do not know in what year Robert died, but we know that he was alive in 1556 and he probably died in the early years of Queen Elizabeth. His widow Dorothy married as her second husband Anthony Maxey of Great Saling Hall, Essex, a son of that John Maxey to whom reference has

already been made. Morant says that she behaved very badly to her Bonham children, disinheriting them in favour of her brood of Maxeys and allowing her eldest son Jerome Bonham an annuity of only £10 a year. Anthony Maxey, her second husband, died in 1592 and this undefeated old lady, who was then sixty-five years of age, married as her third husband John Babington. She died in 1602 and was buried next her second husband, Anthony Maxey, under a fine monumental tomb in Bradwell Church.

(B.6) ELIZABETH BONHAM

I do not know in what order the two daughters of old Thomas Bonham and Katherine come in the family, for they are always lumped together after the sons as persons of lesser importance, but Elizabeth is always mentioned first, so I take her to have been the elder.

She married William Latham of Upminster, Co. Essex.

(B.7) ANNE BONHAM

Anne Bonham married John Barrington of Barrington Hall, Co. Essex. According to the evidence given by John Barrington's mother in the Sapurton case this marriage took place about the year 1525.

All the members of the family of Thomas Bonham I of Stanway Hall and his wife Katherine (Marney), (Generation B) have now been dealt with, and the descendants of all the younger brothers of that generation have been traced, so far as I have found this possible. It is now time to go back to the family of the eldest surviving son, William of Stanway Hall, the head of the main line, and so to start Generation C. It will be remembered that by an arrangement made in 1542 William Bonham and Frances (Tey) his wife were to hold a moiety of the Manor of Stanway for life, with remainder to their son Thomas. This arrangement was probably made on the occasion of Thomas's birth.

Br. Mus. *Collecianex*
Typographica et
Genealogica.

CHAPTER III

GENERATION C

(C.1) THOMAS BONHAM II : b. ? 1542 ; m. (1) Elizabeth Bocking, and (2) Joan ——— ; d. ?

THOMAS BONHAM II is said to have been the only child of William Bonham (B.2) and his wife Frances (Tey). He married, in his father's lifetime and certainly before 1565, when their daughter Elizabeth was baptized in Ashbocking Church, Elizabeth Bocking, who was a sister and prospective co-heiress of Edmund Bocking of Ashbocking, Co. Suffolk. The marriage probably took place some considerable time before 1565, for there were several children and the wife Elizabeth died in 1568 and was buried at Ashbocking¹ on 14 August of that year.

This marriage to a Suffolk heiress probably had a considerable influence on the future fortunes of the Bonham family. Thomas's parents were in possession of Stanway Hall for life and the young couple seem to have taken up their residence at Ashbocking or in that neighbourhood. In 1579/80 Thomas Bonham II is described as 'of Ickworth, Co. Suffolk'. Now both Ashbocking and Ickworth lie not far from the great port of Ipswich so that it is not surprising to find Thomas Bonham II taking part in the great maritime adventures which were the glory of the age.

P.R.O. *State Papers*,
Colonial Series, Oct.
1578, No. 103.

I think there can be little doubt that this was the Thomas Bonham who in 1578 appealed to the Council for relief in respect of his vessel the 'Thomas of Ipswich', which had accompanied Frobisher on his third voyage and 'been so beaten by weather that £100 will not repair her'.

P.R.O. *Acts of the
Privy Council*, 1577
and 1578.

In the previous year he had complained that a vessel of his had been detained by the Prince of Condé, who refused to give her up.

Then again in 1578 one Beton, the surgeon on board the 'Thomas of Ipswich', acting in concert with the crew, threatens to bring an action against her owner Thomas

¹ Everitt gives the place of her burial as Abbotsbury, but I feel pretty sure that this was a slip of the pen, though I have not been able to verify it.

Bonham, and the Council instruct the Lord Mayor of London to entertain no such action until the matter has been further considered, 'as the misdemeanour of the said mariners in the said voyage hath been such as they rather deserve punishment than wages'.

This was not the first association of the Bonham family with the sea and ships, for it may be remembered that as early as 1230 one Giles Bonham had fitted out a ship for the service of Henry III and that a Sir John Bonham, mercer, in the time of Edward I is celebrated in a sixteenth-century poem as having won a great naval victory over a Turkish fleet; but from now on the family is almost continuously occupied with seafaring matters, either with the East India Company or, later, with the Royal Navy.

Thomas Bonham II, after the death of his first wife in 1568, must certainly have married again, for in 1580 he and a wife named Joan levied a fine of Stanway and other manors to Edward Sulyard. But Joan is a complete mystery and I have not been able to discover who she was nor anything about her, not even which of Thomas Bonham II's children belonged to his first marriage and which to his second.

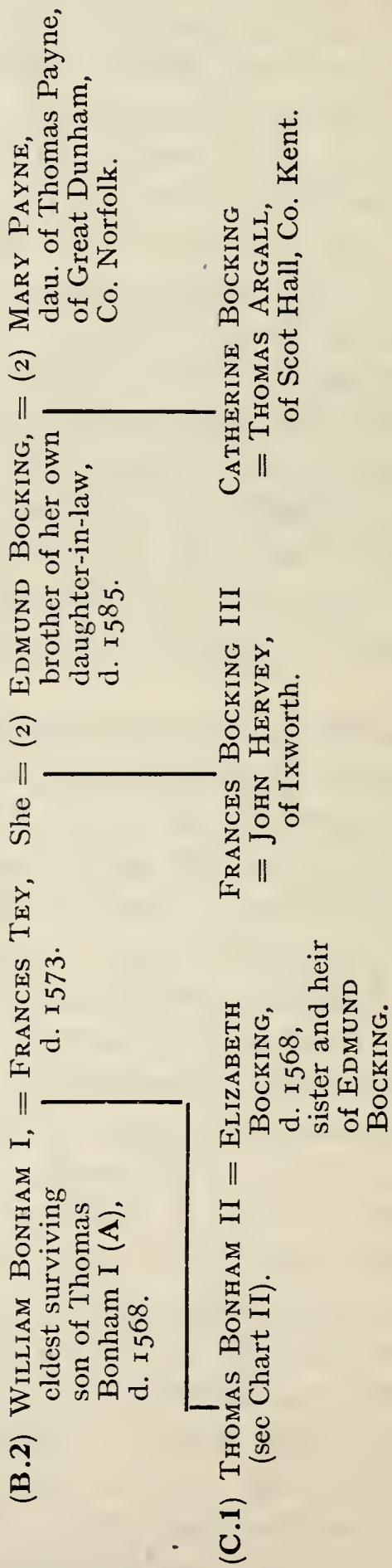
Collectanea, Vol. VII,
pp. 274-5.

1568 was a fateful year for the Bonham family, for in that year Thomas Bonham lost both his father, William Bonham I (B.2) and his first wife, Elizabeth Bocking, and these two deaths led to the strange marriage of his mother to which I have already referred. Thomas Bonham's first wife, Elizabeth Bocking, was 'a sister and prospective co-heiress' of Edmund Bocking, the inheritance consisting apparently of a half of the Manor of Ashbocking. When she died in 1568, before her brother, the prospects of the Bonham family inheriting this desirable property looked gloomy enough. It was in these circumstances that Thomas Bonham's mother, Frances Bonham (Tey), who had just lost her husband that same year, went straight for her objective and married Edmund Bocking,¹ her late daughter-in-law's brother. Edmund Bocking was thirty-nine at the time and Frances was already a grandmother, but she must have been very young when she married her first husband William Bonham (B.2), for she duly presented her second husband, Edmund Bocking, with a daughter.

This unusual marriage seems to have led the genealogists and county historians sadly astray. In their efforts to account for the subsequent divisions of Ashbocking Manor they have credited Frances with a third husband; Morant

¹ His brass in Ashbocking Church.

CHART VIII



gives his name as Thomas Bonham (? her own son) and E. W. Bonham calls him John Warburton. As a matter of fact she could not have married a third husband, for she died and was buried at Ashbocking in 1573, long before her second husband Edmund Bocking, who survived till 1585. Not only did he survive but his first belated venture into matrimony had apparently proved so successful that he repeated the experiment and married as his second wife Mary, daughter of Thomas Payne of Great Dunham, Co. Norfolk, and had a daughter by her.

The subsequent divisions of the Manor of Ashbocking are, I think, not difficult to account for. It is quite clear that a full half of it, together with the manor house, passed to the Bonham family, for William Bonham (D.1), the eldest son of Thomas Bonham II and Elizabeth his wife (Bocking), and grandson of Frances, paid his ingress fee for a moiety in 1623 and died possessed of that moiety in 1628. He had even added to the moiety by the purchase of adjacent land. This moiety was the share of the property which would have come to Elizabeth Bonham (Bocking) if she had survived her brother Edmund Bocking, and it was perhaps entailed on her children.

Page's History of Suffolk.

P.R.O. Chancery Inq. p.m., File 715, No. 32.

The other moiety of the Manor passed to the two daughters of Edmund Bocking by his two wives. His daughter by his first wife Frances, widow Bonham, was Frances Bocking, who was already married at the date of her father's death in 1585 to John Hervey of Ixworth, Co. Suffolk. (She must have been married very young for her mother cannot have married Edmund Bocking before 1568, the year in which her first husband died.) A half of the other moiety of the Manor thus came to the Hervey family.

Edmund Bocking's other daughter by his second wife Mary Payne was Catherine Bocking, who was aged eight when her father died in 1585 and afterwards married Thomas Argall of Scot Hall, Co. Kent, bringing with her a share of the Manor of Ashbocking, for which Thomas Argall paid his ingress fee in 1600.

Coping says that Catherine Argall afterwards married William Bonham of London (D.1), but this is quite untrue as the names of William Bonham's two wives are given in his Funeral Certificate, and Catherine was not one of them.

Page's History of Suffolk.

I have gone into the Bonham acquisition of the Ashbocking property rather fully, for it remained with that family, in part at any rate, for several generations. I have already pointed out that Thomas Bonham II's interests seem rather to have lain in his wife's county of Suffolk than in the

ancestral home of Stanway Hall in Essex. This came about quite naturally, for his father was living at Stanway Hall till his death in 1568, when he left it to his wife for her life and she, in her turn, when she married Edmund Bocking, rented it to him for his life. So Thomas Bonham II can never have had much opportunity of making Stanway Hall his home. He did, however, come to an arrangement with his combined brother-in-law and stepfather Edmund Bocking before 1578, by which the latter surrendered the remainder of his lease for life. This we know from a suit brought against him as lord of the Manor in that year by one of his tenants. But I do not think this arrangement necessarily indicated that Thomas Bonham took up his residence there. I think it may rather have meant that he was preparing to sell the place and that the fine levied in 1580 by Thomas and his second wife Joan to Edward Sulyard, to which reference has already been made, was in fact an outright sale to Sulyard. Thomas Bonham II was certainly the last Bonham owner of Stanway Hall.

I do not know when Thomas Bonham II died nor where he was buried. The Essex Visitations give him two sons, John and William, but we know from family wills, etc. that he had at least two others, George and Edmund.

Berry says that George was the oldest, but I am inclined to think that William, from the fact that it was he who inherited the Ashbocking property, may be better entitled to that honour, and I have accordingly given him the first place.

P.R.O. *Ch.*
Proceedings, Eliz.,
P., p. 1/21.

CHAPTER IV

GENERATION D

(D.1) WILLIAM BONHAM II: b. before 1568; m. (1) Margery Babington, (2) Anne Clough; d. 1628

WILLIAM BONHAM II was by far the most important of the brothers of his generation from the worldly point of view, but neither he nor his descendants are of much interest to the family pedigree, for we know so much about them that I think I can safely say that there is no chance of any of them having been the ancestor of Samuel Bonham, at any rate legitimately. But they are often interesting and amusing in themselves, and it would be a pity to leave them out altogether, so I propose to deal with them from the personal rather than the genealogical point of view.

I have not discovered the exact date of William II's birth, but as he inherited the Ashbocking property I think he must have been a son of his father's first wife Elizabeth Bocking, who brought that property to the family. She died in 1568 and he must therefore have been born before that date. His own statements as to his age in various cases in which he appears as a witness are quite unreliable and would put the year of his birth anywhere between 1564 and 1569, but the exact age of a witness was no very important matter and clerks in the courts were often doubtless careless. The probability seems to be that he was born about the year 1565 and was the eldest of the brothers. He styles himself alternatively 'Citizen and Vintner of London' or 'of the parish of St. Michael at Querne, London, vintner'. For convenience of reference I propose to style him 'William the Vintner'.

He became a great City magnate and it is curious to notice the change of atmosphere and outlook which this brought about. He seems somehow to belong to the age of Queen Anne rather than to that of Queen Elizabeth, and one feels that he would be more at home in periwig and buckled shoes than in doublet and hose and a ruff, and yet he must already have been a person of consequence in the City while Queen Elizabeth still sat on the throne.

*First Letter Book of
the E.I. Co., p. 166.*

He is one of the original grantees of the First Charter given by that Queen to the East India Co. on 23 April 1601, and a Bill of Adventure for £240 is granted to him for their first voyage in that year. The sum had risen to £700 for the third and £800 for the fourth voyages, so that he must have been a man of substance. He was thus carrying on the tradition of his father who, some twenty-five years before, had ventured a ship in Frobisher's voyages.

I have not discovered anything of his activities as a 'Vintner'. Although he was a member of that Company his real business seems to have been rather that of a merchant and shipowner on a large scale, chiefly in connexion with the East India Co.

He was a Governor of Christ's Hospital and left £50 to that institution in his will.

Royal College of
Arms, Funeral
Certificate, 123,
p. 25.

His first wife was Margery Babington of Chester, by whom he had a family of four sons and five daughters. (His great uncle Robert's (B.5) widow, Dorothy Bassett, had married as her third husband one John Babington, and there may be some family connexion here.)

He married secondly, before 1611, Anne Clough, a daughter of George Clough of Co. Salop, and by her he had one son and two daughters. She was a widow when the Vintner married her and had a son by her first marriage, but I have not been able to discover her first husband's name. It may have been Nore, for in her will she mentions grandchildren of that name and the Nores are spoken of as relations in later generations of the Bonham family. On William Bonham's death in 1628 she married again and her third husband was Sir Edward Duncombe, a Lord Mayor of London. She died in 1645/6.

P.R.O. Ch.
Proceedings, C.2.
Jas. 1, B. 30/7.

There are many records of the Vintner giving evidence in lawsuits, chiefly on business matters, but although they are often interesting and amusing, they add little to our knowledge of the man or his family. The only exception is a case which he and his second wife, Anne Clough, brought in 1611 against one John Holmes, who had been a partner of Anne's natural brother Edward Clough, 'silkman'. It gives a picture of one of the periodical visitations of plague which culminated in the great outbreak of 1665. In 1610 'it pleased God to visit the house where John Holmes and Edward Clough kept their joint trade with the infection of the plague'. Both fled and Clough established himself in lodgings in St. Dunstan's in the East, where the plague followed him and made an end of him. John Holmes,

although he knew Clough had the plague repaired to him and finding him in a very weak and feeble state took all his ready money and the keys of his counting house, etc. . . . And the next day after, as soon as the breath was out of the body of the said Edward Clough, John Holmes without regard to any fear or danger repaired to the house where they had kept their joint trade, notwithstanding that the same was not clear of the infection of the plague and there entered into the counting house and opened the desks, cupboards and chests with Edward Clough's keys,

and made off with the contents. He then conspired with Anne Bonham's brother-in-law, Diones Brough, citizen and haberdasher of London, to secure the administration of the dead man's estate in the absence of the next of kin, a brother, George Clough, 'being a merchant and beyond the seas'. The case gives us very full information as to the Clough family. Holmes' courage in facing the plague is not appreciated by them and they evidently regarded it as a flying in the face of Providence and an aggravation of his evil deed, a very characteristic trait of the mentality of the time.

The Vintner owned a house at the sign of 'the Castle' in Paternoster Row and several houses adjoining it, all in the parish of St. Michael at Querne. This property seems to have been a sort of family rookery occupied by a colony of relatives and friends, including Sir Edward Duncombe, who afterwards married his widow, and John Hervey, who had married his relative Frances Bocking; it is a little difficult to explain what exactly her relationship to the Vintner was for she was both his maternal niece and his grandmother's daughter. He also owned five houses in St. Olave, Hart St.

P.R.O. *Ch. Inq. p.m.*
File 780, No. 47.

The moiety of the Manor of Ashbocking is duly recorded in the Inquest post mortem of his Suffolk property, but it is not recorded how it came to him.

Ibid., File 715,
No. 32.

William the Vintner died in February 1628. The unreliability of even contemporary records is strikingly shown by the fact that the day of his death is given in his Funeral Certificate as 7 February, in his London Inquest post mortem as 12 February, in his Suffolk Inquest post mortem as 20 February, and on the inscription on his tomb as 12 February.

He was buried in Old St. Paul's and a tablet was set up there to his memory. The tablet of course was destroyed in the great fire of London, but Stow quotes the Latin inscription upon it, and Major Payne Fisher in his work on

Stow's *London*, Vol. 3,
p. 168.

'the Tombs etc. lately visible in St. Paul's Cathedral', published in 1685, also quotes the inscription and pays a fulsome eulogy to the Bonham family.

INTERLUDE B

THIS seems to be the appropriate place in which to introduce an Interlude on yet another Thomas Bonham, who was almost a contemporary of William the Vintner. He has the distinction of being the only member of the family whose name appears in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, but I have not been able to place him at all in the family pedigree.

Venn's *Alumni Cantabrigienses and Alumni Oxonienses*.

He matriculated at St. John's College, Cambridge, in 1581 and took his B.A. degree there in 1584. He then went on to Oxford and took his M.D. degree there in 1611. He afterwards practised medicine in London and styles himself 'doctor in physicke'. He published several medical works.

P.R.O. *Col. of State Papers, Domestic Series*, 1617.

His London practice was not all smooth sailing, for in 1617 'Michael Silvester, page to the Queen (Anne of Denmark, wife of James I) is a suitor to the King for £30, moiety of a debt of £60 due by Dr. Thomas Bonham for practising physic for a year without licence from the College of Physicians'. I do not know whether the page claimed his fee as an informer or whether a half of such fines was a recognized appanage of his page's office, but judgment went against Bonham and he had to pay.

P.R.O. *Ch. Proc.*, Jas I, B. 18/49, and B. 32/55.

Another curious case in 1622 in which a Thomas Bonham was involved may relate to this man. In that year a Thomas Bonham, who styles himself 'of London, gent.', sues Elias Bingham for a sum of £40. He declares that he had handed over this sum 'for the future maintenance and preferment in living' of his illegitimate son by one Dorothie Carter. He calls the boy 'Thomas Bonham the younger' and says that he was then (in 1622) about seven years old. Dorothie Carter had subsequently married Elias Bingham and died. The charge is that Elias Bingham and Dorothie's father John Spidell had appropriated the £40 intended for the young Thomas Bonham.

A curious point in the case is the conjunction at this early date of the names of Bonham and Carter.

I was inclined at first to attribute the incident to the Vintner's son Thomas Bonham III (E.4) but as he would only have been about twelve years old when the child was born this theory is obviously impossible. The Doctor, on the other hand, would have been about forty-nine. It

must be confessed, however, that the complainant in the case styles himself 'gent.', and not 'doctor in physicke', so that the father of Dorothie Carter's child may have been some other Thomas Bonham of whom we have no record.

I do not know whether the Doctor ever married. He died about 1627, a year before William the Vintner.

YOUNGER MEMBERS OF GENERATION D

WE have still to deal with the younger members of Generation D, the brothers and sisters of William the Vintner, and their descendants.

(D.2) ELIZABETH BONHAM

This was the daughter of Thomas Bonham II and Elizabeth Bocking who was baptized at Ashbocking in 1565. She married John Filby of Ashbocking and is mentioned in her brother the Vintner's will. P.C.C. Ridley 22.

(D.3) FRANCES BONHAM

She married — Yarborough, and her brother the Vintner calls her 'my sister Frances Yarborough' in his will.

(D.4) GEORGE BONHAM: b. about 1568; m. Mary Bishopp; d. 1618

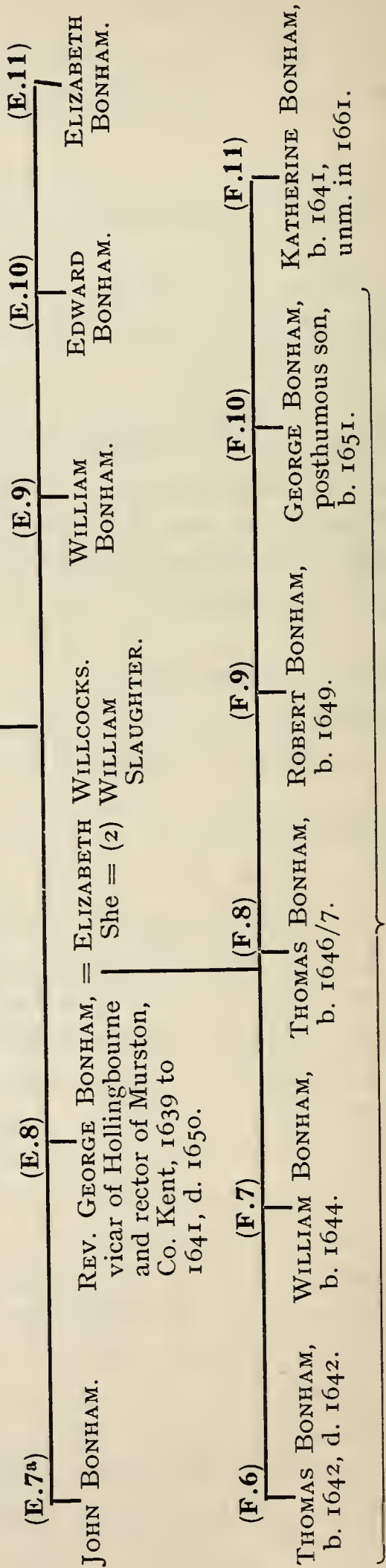
George Bonham, from the point of view of the family pedigree, is the most interesting of the brothers of the D Generation, for it is to him that Burke (who traces his descent quite correctly from old Thomas Bonham of Stanway Hall (A.1)) attributes the ancestry of Samuel Bonham.

According to his own evidence, given in a lawsuit in which he appeared as a witness in 1617, he was then 'aged forty-nine years or thereabouts', so that he was born about 1568 and must have been the son of Thomas Bonham II's first wife, Elizabeth Bocking, who died in that year. There can be no doubt as to his identity, for in his will he makes his brother William of London (the Vintner) one of his executors and the Vintner in his turn leaves legacies to 'his kinsmen John and George Bonham' (two of George's sons) to his 'kinswoman Maria Bonham' (George's widow) and to 'Elizabeth, daughter of my brother George Bonham, deceased'.

George Bonham always styles himself 'of Herringfleet, Co. Suffolk'. Herringfleet is a little place tucked away in the far north-east corner of Suffolk in a tongue of that

CHART IX

(D.4) GEORGE BONHAM, = MARY BISHOPP.
of Herringfleet,
Co. Suffolk,
second son of
Thomas Bon-
ham II ; b.
about 1568,
d. 1618.



None of the sons are mentioned in their father's will. He leaves everything to his wife and daughter.

county that runs up into Norfolk between Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth. It was natural enough that he should settle in Suffolk, for he was probably born at Ashbocking in that county and the family interests, as I have already shown, had shifted from Essex on the marriage of his father to a Suffolk heiress. If he owned land at Herringfleet it was probably in right of his wife, for he does not mention it in his will. Her name was Mary Bishopp and she was probably a Suffolk woman, for he married her at Somerleyton, not far from Herringfleet, on 18 December 1598, when he was about thirty years of age.

He must have been a person of some consequence in Suffolk, for he was under-Sheriff for the county in 1609 and apparently still held that office in 1617. Except for his giving evidence in a few lawsuits of only local importance I have not been able to find out much about him. He died in 1618, about fifty years old, and was buried on 10 April of that year at Somerleyton, where he had been married twenty years before.

P.R.O. *Ch. Proc.*,
C.21, F. 14/16.

P.R.O. *Exchequer
Depositions*, 13 Jas.
I, Michaelmas 7.

P.R.O. *Ch.
Depositions*, Eliz. to
Chas. I, Bundle 3,
39, No. 10.

From his will we learn that his wife Mary survived him and that they had four sons, John, George, William and Edward, and a daughter Elizabeth.

Ipswich Probate
Office Book, 1618,
fol. 23.

He had bought lands and tenements in Somerleyton from one John Williams and he directs that these are to be sold and the proceeds to be distributed among his children. John is to have £80 within two years of the sale of the land and George, William and Edward are to have £120 among them when they come of age. His wife Mary is to be residuary legatee and executrix and his other executors are to be his brother William Bonham of London (the Vintner) and Robert Stanton of Somerleyton, gent. This Robert Stanton had been a party to one of the lawsuits in which George had given evidence.

The sons inherited no land and not much cash, so that it would not be surprising if they took a step down in the social scale to become simple yeomen. All the evidence so far obtained goes to show that Samuel Bonham was of yeoman stock. I believe that I have now discovered Samuel's parentage and that his father was an Essex yeoman named Thomas Bonham, born in 1644. The gap between George, who died in 1618, and this Thomas, who was born in 1644, is not a long one. The eldest of George's sons, John, cannot have been more than nineteen at his father's death, for his father had only been married twenty years when he died. Any of these four boys, therefore, who were all under age in 1618, might well have been the grandfather, or even the

father, of this Thomas Bonham, and the great-grandfather, or grandfather, of the elusive Samuel.

Venn.

P.R.O. *Ch. Proc.*
before 1714, C.7,
56/16.

The favourite up to date seems to have been the second son George. E. W. Bonham thinks that he may be identified with a George Bonham who became a parson in Kent. This man matriculated from Corpus Christi, Cambridge, in 1623, two years after the death of his supposed father, George Bonham of Herringfleet. The date is entirely suitable, but it is puzzling to find that he is described as 'of Northamptonshire'. He then took Orders and was vicar of Hollingbourne, Kent, from 1639 to 1647, and rector of Murston in 1641. He married Elizabeth Willcocks and had at least four sons and a daughter Catherine. But I think that there is good reason for supposing that all his sons died before him without issue, for none of them are mentioned in his will and in 1661 the daughter Catherine Bonham brought an action against her mother, who had afterwards married one William Slaughter, alleging that her father had left all his estate to be divided equally between his wife and his daughter, but that her mother had got all the deeds into her own hands and appropriated the whole estate. This certainly does not look as if the Rev. George had left any surviving sons and so I think he may be ruled out from the competition for the ancestorship of Samuel.

Of the remaining members of the Herringfleet family, John, William and Edward and their sister Elizabeth, I have been able to learn absolutely nothing, but, according to Burke, one of the sons must have been Samuel's forebear, and if Samuel really did come of the Stanway Hall stock, this seems the most likely line.

(D.5) JOHN BONHAM

P.R.O. *State Papers*,
Colonial Series,
No. 378.

John Bonham is given as one of the brothers of this generation (son of Thomas Bonham II (C.1)) in the Visitation of 1634, and in the Court Minutes of the East India Co. of 1 September 1607 one R. Fosse is admitted under John Bonham, so that, like his brother William the Vintner, he must have been one of the early members of the Company.

P.C.C. Seager, f. 108.

E. W. Bonham attributes the will of a 'John Bonham of Stepney', who died in 1650, to this man; but I think the date, though possible, is rather too late for this generation, especially as the testator makes provision for his wife marrying again.

The other brothers of this generation died respectively in 1608, 1618 and 1628 (this last at the age of sixty), and it is not very probable that a man who died as late as 1650

belonged to the same generation. The will of 1650 might more probably be that of the John who was one of the sons of George of Herringfleet. In any case it mentions only two daughters and no son and I think we may conclude that the John of this will, whoever he was, is not in the running for the ancestorship of Samuel.

But this still leaves the John Bonham who is mentioned in the Visitation of 1634 and was a member of the East India Co. in 1607 to be reckoned with, though he is not mentioned in the wills of any of his three brothers and I have not been able to find out anything about him.

(D.6) EDMOND BONHAM

Edmond Bonham is a much more living personality. He, too, was connected with the East India Co., and is the first Bonham of whom we have any record as a practical seaman, for he went to sea in the service of the Company and was master of their ship *Consent* (115 tons) under the captaincy of David Middleton on a voyage to Bantam in Java in 1607. He arrived there safely on 14 November of that year, but apparently never returned and his will was proved by his widow on 25 January 1608/9. He had a premonition of his fate, for the will begins with the words: 'Being bound to the East Indians, knowing the passage thither to be long and very dangerous and the return from thence uncertain . . .'

I.O. Letters received by the E.I. Co. from its servants in the East, Vol. I, 1602-13.

P.C.C. 8. Dorset.

The will contains the following curious entry:

Item. That for my brother William Bonham, Citizen and Vintner of London, hath dyated and lodged me and my wife and child for many years and at sundry tymes, whereby I acknowledged myself to be indebted to him in the somme of two hundred pounds. For the obtaining of the Kyng his most gracious pardon which by his means and presentment I have obtained it at His said Majestie's hands; for the repayment of which two said sommes I stand bound with my said brother in the somme of six hundred pounds, as by the said obligation may appear: for the better satisfaction of the said somme of three hundred pounds unto him I do hereby give and bequeath unto my said brother William Bonham all the rest of my goods and chattels.

The arithmetic seems odd, but the intention is clear enough.

The crime for which the Vintner obtained pardon for his brother Edmond (at considerable expense, be it noted) was a mystery until I chanced upon a document in the Public Record Office noting that a pardon was granted in November

P.R.O. Signet Office Docquets.

1606 to 'Edmond Bonham, late of Southampton, maryner, for pyracý by him committed'.

One wonders how the Victorian ladies of the Bonham family, who shuddered at the idea of Samuel Bonham having been a slave-dealer, would have reacted to the notion of having a pirate in the family. I fancy it would have been considered more genteel and certainly more romantic. And Edmond may quite possibly have been the ancestor of Samuel. In his will he leaves 'to Mary, my loving wife, £100 and all and every such household stuff as she hath in her house at Southampton or elsewhere'. The rest, as already stated, he left to his brother William in satisfaction of his debts to him. But in his bequest to William noticed above he mentions 'my child', but without indicating its sex. He also mentions his wife's brother Thomas Hancocke. E. W. Bonham states that he was informed in 1892 by a Mr. Sage 'that Edmond's wife was the widow of —— Hancock, and that the child mentioned in the will was a son named Thomas'. He adds that Mr. Sage could give him no authority for this statement. It scarcely agrees with Edmond's own reference in his will to Thomas Hancock as his 'wife's brother' and, if there be any truth in it, the only explanation would seem to be that Edmond used 'brother' for 'brother-in-law', a not uncommon usage at the time. But whether Mary had been the widow Hancock or not, it is pretty clear from the wording of the will that the house at Southampton belonged to her, so she perhaps came from there. From the fact that no provision is made in the will for the 'child', I am inclined to think that it may have died and that the debt incurred by Edmond to his brother for 'dieting and lodging' it referred to earlier times.

This completes the chronicle of the brothers and sisters of William the Vintner, and we must now go back to his own family, of which there is a complete list in his Funeral Certificate: four sons and five daughters by his first wife Margery Babington, and one son and two daughters by his second wife, Anne Clough.

CHAPTER V

GENERATION E

OF the children of the Vintner's first marriage Henry, William, John and Elizabeth all died unmarried before their father and, to save space, I have not given them numbers in their generation. It need only be mentioned here that William, the second son, is the first Etonian Bonham of whom I have found any record. He was a scholar at Eton and went up to King's College, Cambridge, at the age of sixteen, and died shortly afterwards.

(E.1) MARY BONHAM: m. (1) John Downes of London (he died before 1629), and she m. (2) Thomas Warren of London

(E.2) FRANCES BONHAM: m. John Sidway, citizen and grocer of London

(E.3) ANNE BONHAM: m. Benjamin Henshaw, citizen and merchant tailor of London

It is curious to note how, with their transfer to the city, the whole social outlook of the Bonham family had changed. We hear no more of the strange Tudor marriages designed to keep manors and lands in the family, but a thriving business and an assured position in the City now become the chief considerations in matrimony.

(E.4) THOMAS BONHAM III: b. about 1603; m. Anne Manning; d. 1676

Thomas Bonham III was the only surviving son of William the Vintner by his first marriage and so became head of the family. His father left to him his moiety of the Manor of Ashbocking and his house property in Hart St. We have no evidence that the Vintner ever lived at Ashbocking, but he must have kept up the Manor house there, for he left its furniture and contents to his son, and the son certainly paid occasional visits to the place, as we shall see presently.

Thomas Bonham, like his elder brother William, was a scholar at Eton and matriculated at King's College, Cambridge, in 1622, took his B.A. in 1627, his M.A. in 1630, and was admitted at Gray's Inn in 1629.

*Venn's Alumni
Cantabrigienses.*

Neither he nor his younger brother Edward (E.5) took to

his father's business in the City. Not content with the Ashbocking property which he had inherited from his father, he acquired the Manor of Valence near Dagenham in Essex and so came back to the county of his grandfather, the last Bonham of Stanway Hall. The Bonham instinct for pleasant places seems to have been at fault here, for the flat Dagenham country can never have been very beautiful, and to-day it is a wilderness of factories, bungalows and unfinished building estates, and I inquired in vain for the site of the ancient Manor of Valence. But if its site was not beautiful the name of Thomas Bonham's new estate was at least romantic, for we learn from his will that its full title was the delightful one of 'Vallence Gallante' and that it was held of the Dean and Chapter of St. George's, Windsor. I do not know how he acquired his property, probably by purchase, but in 1616 it had belonged to one Nathaniel Henshaw, an elder brother of the Benjamin Henshaw who had married his sister Anne (E.3).

Thomas Bonham was one of those strange characters that crop up from time to time in the Bonham family history; he was as violent as his forebear, Robert Bonham of Bradwell, though his violence took a less picturesque form than the breaking into manors by armed force and the plucking of beards. He had a passion for the Law and was rarely out of the law-courts, whether as plaintiff or defendant. It was a passion which was shared, in more or less degree by most of the members of the family of his generation, and it is largely due to their many lawsuits that we know so much about their relationships.

P.R.O. *Ch. Proc.*,
C.2 Chas. I, B. 20/9.

Soon after their father's death Thomas and his brother Edward (E.5) brought an action against the executor of their father's will, alleging that he was diverting the funds of the estate to his own use.

Ibid., 74/53.

In 1633 there is an amusing case in which Thomas Bonham accuses one John Veere of cheating him, with the aid of accomplices and false dice, at a game of hazard. Veere had been staying with Bonham at Ashbocking and accompanied him to Ipswich, where they spent the night at an inn. Bonham alleges that Veere induced him to play against his will and Veere alleges that it was just the other way about. Bonham says that he was at first allowed to win in order to egg him on but that soon Veere called in a confederate with loaded dice and he began to lose. He then lost heavily and began to borrow money from those present, including Veere. This he also lost. He had, in fact, a bad evening. He was afterwards threatened with proceedings by those

from whom he had borrowed and retaliated with the charge that he had been cheated. Veere's answer is straightforward and convincing. He denies absolutely that there was any cheating or loaded dice and alleges that it was Bonham who first suggested playing and refused to stop when the luck went against him. He speaks of Bonham's 'jealous and causeless imaginations and meditations of his losses when his moneys were so lost'. I do not know how the case ended, but the general impression is that Bonham was a bad loser and lost his head and his temper as well as his money.

He had, of course, trouble with his tenants. In 1637 he was sued by one of them for not keeping up his fences properly, a not uncommon cause of dispute between landlord and tenant; but the case is not without interest, for we learn from it that Thomas Bonham was already in occupation of land at Dagenham in 1637 on a long lease from the Dean and Canons of St. George's, Windsor, and his defence, moreover, is characteristic. He pleads that in his lease he had reserved the hawking and hunting rights over the land and that 'in following the same sports he had sometimes gone over the said lands, but, as near as he could, hath gone over the hedges where gaps had been formerly made, and very seldom otherwise'. The idea of hawking and hunting in the Dagenham of to-day reminds one of the legend of shooting snipe on the site of Eaton Square on which the older generation of to-day was brought up; but Bonham's general excuse for neglecting his fences is still more surprising, for he avers that

P.R.O. Ch. Proc.,
C.2 Chas. I, H. 82/42.

this hath been occasioned by reason that the lands are situate and lying within the Forest of Waltham, where it is not lawful for any man to make his fences so strong but that His Majesty's deer may have free egress and regress into any man's grounds, which is the occasion that many gaps in the said hedges are laid open.

He had more than one lawsuit about his rabbit-warren at Dagenham, which was apparently leased from him by his Nore relations, and there was constant trouble about his London house property in St. Olave, Hart St. He had mortgaged this heavily and neglected to pay either capital or interest and when the mortgagees foreclosed he urged the tenants to refuse to pay their rents.

P.R.O. Ch. Proc.,
Series II, 1640/42.

He was always being sued for alleged failure to make payments to which he had bound himself, a peculiarity which had unpleasant consequences in a series of cross

P.R.O. *Ch. Proc.*,
C.8, 137/11, and C.5,
418/64.

suits about his eldest daughter Anne's marriage to his neighbour, James Harvey. He had engaged, through a certain James Turnour, who was apparently a lawyer, to settle £1,500 upon her. After the marriage he refused to pay a penny, alleging that he had been cozened as to the extent of the young man's fortune, that he had forbidden his daughter to have anything to do with him and that they had been secretly married without his consent.

The case is an amusing one and well illustrates the mercenary views of marriage which prevailed at the time. James Harvey, the bridegroom, denies that he ever said to his father-in-law 'that he would marry Anne, if he could obtain her consent, although he had never a groat with her' and adds ungallantly that 'being oftentimes solicited by Bonham and several agents whom he employed for that purpose to marry the said Anne, he did, after many such solicitations, condescend to treat with the Complainant about a marriage portion'. He first demanded £2,500, but 'in conclusion did condescend to accept £1,500'.

James Turnour, in his evidence, is a little more tender to the unfortunate Anne's feelings, for he alleges that 'Mr. Harvey had overtures from several persons of much greater fortunes and believes he might easily have encompassed the same, but that his affections did incline him to the gentlewoman he now enjoys'. He further says that

notwithstanding the ignorance he [Thomas Bonham] now pleads in relation to Mr. Harvey's estate and the timorousness that lies upon his spirits lest his daughter should be deserted by her husband or brought to beggary, he hath good cause to believe that such allegations and suggestions are merely evasive and dilatory and with a design to avoid the payment of his daughter's portion.

Anne herself 'doth deny that ever her mother dissuaded her from marrying James Harvey or did seem to be troubled therewith or to dissent therefrom or that her father did express any dislike thereof'.

We learn from the proceedings that Thomas Bonham and his unfortunate wife had spent a month in Colchester gaol as a result of an earlier action brought by their son-in-law and that they were only liberated on the death of Oliver Cromwell in 1658, when the case was transferred to another court.

Richardson might almost have taken the Bonham family for his model for the Harlowe household in *Clarissa Harlowe*, though the work was produced nearly 100 years later.

This seems to have been Thomas Bonham's last effort as a litigant, for, although he lived till 1676, I have found no further cases in which he was engaged.

His wife was Anne, daughter of Edward Manning of St. Mary Cray, Co. Kent. She survived him and died at Valence in 1678 and was buried at Dagenham.

But perhaps the most astonishing thing about Thomas Bonham III is his Latin epitaph in Dagenham Church of which the following is a translation :

Stay, Wayfarer !

Lest you be ignorant who is buried here, it is worth your while to know that it is Thomas Bonham Esquire, Lord of Valentia in Middlesex. He was an agreeable poet and yet sublime, a shining ray of genius, an ornament of polite literature and a happy model of elegance. He is ever to be praised and can never, alas, be sufficiently lamented. This marble cannot contain his other virtues, nor indeed scarcely would the quarry itself from which it is hewn.

He died in May, 1676, in the 73rd year of his age.

Then follows the inscription to his long-suffering wife :

Here, joined once more, rests also his wife ; his Anne lies in the arms of her beloved husband.

Which, one wonders, is the true picture ? We have not inherited the sublime poems or the elegant models of polite literature, but only a sorry catalogue of family squabbles and lawsuits. But the lawsuits and the poems and Thomas and Anne are long since dead and one can only say : " *Requiescánt.* "

Thomas Bonham III and Anne Manning his wife had many children, but only one son and four daughters who survived them. These will be dealt with under the next generation and we must go back now to Thomas's half-brother and sisters, the children of the Vintner by his second wife, Anne Clough.

(E.5) EDWARD BONHAM : d. unmarried in 1679

All we know about Edward Bonham is that he was associated with his half-brother Thomas III in the action against the executor of their father's will already referred to. He inherited from his father the Vintner the latter's property in Paternoster Row, but retired to Ryton in Warwickshire and died there unmarried in 1679. There is a memorial to him in the church at Ryton, put up by his

nieces Anne and Elizabeth Dilke, the daughters of his sister Elizabeth (E. 6).

(E.6) ELIZABETH BONHAM: d. 19 January 1688

It will be noticed that the Vintner named two of his daughters Elizabeth. The first, by his first wife, had died in infancy, but the second, by his second wife, survived him. She married Thomas Dilke of Maxstoke Castle, Co. Warwick (he died 30 June 1632).

(E.7) HELEN BONHAM

She married Henry Proby, son of Sir Peter Proby of Brampton, who was Lord Mayor of London in 1622.

CHAPTER VI

GENERATIONS F AND G

GENERATION F

(F.1) THOMAS BONHAM IV: b. 1639; m. Elizabeth Jones

THOMAS BONHAM IV, the only surviving son of the litigious Thomas Bonham III and his wife Anne Manning, was born at his mother's home at St. Mary Cray in Kent and baptized at Dagenham in 1639, so that he was thirty-seven years of age when his father died. He also went to Eton and King's College, Cambridge, where he matriculated in 1663, took his B.A. degree in 1667/8 and his M.A. in 1672.

He inherited from his father the Bonham property at Ashbocking and paid his ingress fee there on his father's death in 1676. Valence was left to his mother for her life and he succeeded to that property on her death two years later in 1678.

He married in December 1676, in the same year in which his father died, Elizabeth Jones of St. Swithin, London, spinster. Berry gives her maiden name as Micklethwaite and refers to her will, but there is nothing in the will to show what her maiden name was and there is very good reason to suppose that it was Jones, for the name is so given in the Register of St. Mary Woolnoth and in *London Marriage Licences*, where, moreover, she is described as a spinster and her husband as a bachelor 'of Vallence, Essex'. Berry's error has been repeated by subsequent writers.

Register of St. Mary,
Woolnoth.

Thomas Bonham IV and his wife Elizabeth Jones had an only son William (G.1), born in 1679, but he died in the following year.

YOUNGER MEMBERS OF GENERATION F

(F.2) ANNE BONHAM

Anne Bonham married James Harvey and we have already dealt at some length with the squabbles and lawsuits which arose over this marriage.

(F.3) MARGARET BONHAM

Margaret Bonham died unmarried at the age of thirty-seven, leaving a large fortune. Her will is a long and very feminine one, leaving many of her personal belongings, such as 'my black laced gown, my flowered mantua and my greene satin petticoate to my sister Dagger' and 'my fine child bed sheete to my sister Bonham'. There are diamond rings and silver spoons and a little silver cup, all left to various members of the family, so that the will is valuable for family relationships.

(F.4) DIANA BONHAM: m. William Dagger

(F.5) CATHERINE BONHAM: m. Thomas Ashby

All other children of this generation died as infants.

GENERATION G

(G.1) WILLIAM BONHAM: b. 1679; d. 1680

With the death of this child, the only son of Thomas Bonham IV (F.1) and Elizabeth Jones, his wife, within a year of his birth the direct male line of the Bonhams of Stanway Hall came to an end.

(G.2) FRANCES BONHAM: d. unmarried and under twenty-one
in 1710

(G.3) ELIZABETH BONHAM: m. Daniel Skinner of London,
linen draper

(G.4) REBECCA BONHAM: m. George Mildmay of Corbett's Tye,
Essex

CHAPTER VII

SAMUEL BONHAM

SAMUEL BONHAM: b. 1677; ? m. (1) 1703, Sarah Dewey,
(2) 1713, Jane Pinson; d. 1745

SAMUEL BONHAM is the mystery man of the family. We know quite a lot about him, so far as his actual career is concerned, but neither on his tomb nor in any of the records concerning him is there any indication of his parentage.

Before discussing his ancestry let us first set down what we do know about him.

According to the inscription on his tomb he was born in 1677.

He describes himself alternatively as 'of Ratcliff in the parish of Stepney, mariner' or as 'of Stepney, Co. Middlesex, merchant'.

I think he must have been married twice, for in the register of St. Dunstan's, Stepney, I find it recorded that on 17 September 1703, 'Samuel Bonham of Wapping, Mariner, aged 27, married Sarah Dewey, spinster, over 21 years of age'. This may of course, have been another Samuel Bonham, but I find it difficult to believe that there can have been two Samuel Bonhams, both mariners, of exactly the same age and living so close to one another as at Wapping and Stepney. The bride perhaps died shortly after marriage, and if the bridegroom was our Samuel they certainly had no children.

Samuel married again in 1713 Jane, daughter of Andrew Pinson, Esq., and his wife Sarah Cuttance of Weymouth and Melcombe Regis. Pinsons and Cuttances were both seafaring families and both came from Weymouth and Melcombe Regis.

Samuel Bonham's early life must have been spent mostly at sea, for in 1717 he states that he had been ten or eleven times Commander of a ship or ships carrying slaves to the plantations in America, and in 1726 he says that he has been acquainted with the coast of Africa for twenty-four years,

*P.R.O. Town
Depositions, 1350 E.*

' for 13 or 14 of which he was master of several ships in that trade '.

P.R.O. *Town
Depositions and Ch.
Proc.*

We have the names of several of the vessels in which he was interested, but it is not always easy to tell whether as captain, owner or insurer of the cargo or as a mixture of all three. It seems to have been a custom of the time for the Commander to own a share of both the vessel and the cargo and, in later years at any rate, Samuel Bonham was largely interested in insurance of cargoes.

In 1714 he was in command of the *Rapier* galley, which was cast away in Jamaica with a cargo of ' gold dust and elephants' teeth ', which he succeeded in rescuing and brought home safely on another vessel. In 1720 he was interested in the ship *Diligence*, which was lost by fire off the coast of Portugal. In 1724 he sued the owners of the *John and Thomas*, which was lost off Portland, as one of the underwriters of the cargo.

Br. Mus. Add. MSS.
32770, f. 86, and
32776, f. 292.

In 1728 he was part owner of the *Ann* galley, bound from Guinea to Jamaica with a cargo of slaves and seized by the Spaniards and taken to Cuba and condemned there as prize. She was still detained in 1732 when Samuel writes to the Duke of Newcastle that ' being confined at home with the gout ' he cannot call upon him to discuss the matter.

He is charged on one occasion with conspiring with the Captain of his own ship *Margaret* in buying from pirates certain goods which they had seized from another vessel.

In 1728 he had trouble with regard to the *Peter* and *Dolphin*, which he and others had underwritten. The owners claimed the insurance money on the plea that the vessels had been seized by pirates, while Samuel and his partners declared that they had been lawfully arrested by a recognized Spanish privateer and condemned, and that the underwriters were therefore not liable.

In 1733 he was part owner of the *Sarah* galley, which carried a cargo worth £4,000 to Guinea, ' where she bartered it for negroes, gold and elephants' teeth '.

We get some lurid details of the slave trade from these cases. We are told that of the 408 negroes embarked on the *Sarah* from the Guinea Coast, ' owing to the great mortality which was on board the said ship only 167 arrived alive in Jamaica. It was apparently the custom to allot a certain number of the slaves to the Commander of the vessel as his own private property, his perquisites so to speak, and the share of the Commander of the *Sarah*

was seven negroes. The Commander, however, died on the voyage and Bonham and the other owners claimed that he had not properly carried out his instructions and had failed to have his seven slaves 'marked with his private mark in the presence of the officers', as required by the terms of his agreement. They therefore refused to pay to his estate the value of the seven slaves. The Commander's sister contested the case, brought an action in the Admiralty Court and had the *Sarah* arrested.

In 1717 Samuel Bonham was called upon as an expert to give evidence as to the relative value of slave ships on their departure from London and their arrival at the plantations in America. He declares that

P.R.O. *Town
Depositions*, 1364 S.

the conveniences made for the negroes, which usually consist of casks, boards, irons or shackles and a furnace for boiling their victuals are, according to this deponent's best judgment and belief, rendered one half less in value after landing of the negroes in the plantations than the prime cost thereof, taking one with another.

In 1726 he was again called upon as an expert to give evidence before the Commissioners of Trade and Plantations as to the condition of the Company's ports and settlements on the coast of Africa. He says that he had had twenty-four years' experience of the African coast and that he had been there fifteen or sixteen years ago in the employment of the Company. He reports on all the settlements and forts along the coast and gives his evidence with admirable clearness. His general conclusion is 'that he believes forts and settlements are of no manner of use, but that two or three men-of-war would be the only security'. He gives some interesting details as to the price of slaves, saying that at Anamaboo they were sold at about £10 or £12 a head, but that the price had now risen to about £24 'owing to the great demand for them'. At Whydah, since it had been made a free port, the price of a slave had risen from £4 to £10.

P.R.O. *Journal of the
Commissioners for
Trade and
Plantations*, p. 258.

There was evidently no sense of shame about the slave trade and Samuel Bonham was probably a perfectly humane and worthy citizen. He was certainly looked up to and regarded as a person whose opinions on matters of high policy, such as the status and defence of the Company's African properties, could be relied upon and were well worth having.

He does not appear to have gone to sea after middle age, but concentrated more and more on the underwriting busi-

ness, often in partnership with a Jew named Moses Mocatta. I have also found him associated, for the formation of a company to trade in Pennyslvania, with Jeremiah and Daniel Quare and have wondered whether the latter was the famous clockmaker.

Samuel was elected Churchwarden for Ratcliff Hamlet in 1727.

His business evidently prospered and he retired to Essex. His earliest purchase of land there seems to have been in 1717, when he bought marsh lands in the parish of Barking, but it was from 1734 to 1739 that he was admitted to lands in Orsett and Bulphan. He then built Orsett House, a plain and rather stark red brick square block of building, not to be confused with its more stately neighbour Orsett Place.

He died at Orsett on 28 February 1745, aged sixty-eight, according to the inscription on his tombstone. The entry in the church register gives the date as 1744, a discrepancy which is doubtless due to the use in the register of the old style of calculation, according to which the New Year began only on Lady Day. The family vault lies under the church and the elaborate monument in the form of an obelisk stands in the churchyard at some distance from it. It may possibly have been erected by some of his descendants some time after his death. E. W. Bonham, curiously enough, does not mention the fact that it bears the arms of Bonham, as used by the Wiltshire and Stanway Hall Bonhams, impaled with those of Pinson. His wife, Jane Pinson, survived him for many years and was buried beside him in 1771, aged seventy-eight.

But although, as shown above, we have quite a respectable knowledge of Samuel Bonham's career, no indication of his parentage appears in any of the documents yet discovered and, from family letters quoted by E. W. Bonham, it would seem that Samuel's own grandsons were ignorant of the identity of their great-grandfather.

The name of Samuel had not hitherto appeared in any of the Wiltshire or Essex families of Bonham. It seems indeed to have been rather an unusual name in England until the seventeenth century, when it became suddenly fashionable. When, therefore, I discovered the occurrence in 1680 of the name of another Samuel Bonham 'of Wapping in the parish of Stepney' (our Samuel's own parish) I thought I must be on the right track. This Samuel Bonham was perhaps the son of a John Bonham 'of Whitechapel'

who gave evidence in a lawsuit in 1645, for both men describe themselves as 'bricklayers'.

P.R.O. *Town
Depositions*,
C.24, 690 H.

The Victorian ladies of the Bonham family who were so shocked to discover that Samuel Bonham had been a slave-dealer would probably have resented still more the idea that his father may have been a bricklayer, though it may be pointed out that the term 'bricklayer' had in earlier times a much wider connotation than it has now. Ben Jonson's stepfather, who was Controller of Queen Elizabeth's works and Surveyor to the Dean and Chapter of Westminster, is described as such in the entry of his marriage in the register of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields in 1575. The City Companies were proud of their crafts and the day when every butcher dubs himself a purveyor, every druggist a pharmacist, and every milliner a modiste had not yet arisen. But whether the 'bricklayer' Bonhams actually laid bricks or were what would be called nowadays 'builders' or 'contractors' is of no great consequence. Samuel Bonham the bricklayer must certainly be taken into account as the possible father of Samuel Bonham the slave-dealer.

But at the same time I believe that I have hit upon a better documented and, incidentally, a rather more genteel parentage for our Samuel.

In going through registers of a suitable date I chanced upon the following entry of a marriage: 'Oct. 14, 1674. Thomas Bonham of Theydon Park, Co. Essex, yeoman, widower, about 30, and Anne Thorowgood of Bobbingworth, Co. Essex, at Parish Church of Bobbingworth.'

Harl. Soc.
Publications, Vol. 34.

The date was suitable, just two years before the birth of our Samuel, and by good luck I felt impelled to follow up the clue. 'Theydon Park' had disappeared and the only trace of it was a road of that name in the modern suburb of Theydon Bois; but I was told that there were village churches at Theydon Mount and Theydon Garnon and in the register of the latter church I found the following entry: '1676. Samuel Bonham, son of Thomas and Ann, baptized Aug. 3rd.'

The date fitted exactly with the inscription on Samuel Bonham's tomb at Orsett, which stated that he was sixty-eight when he died on 28 February 1745. He would not have attained his sixty-ninth year until the following August. This, of course, may only be a coincidence, but the more I searched into the matter the more convinced I became that the child baptized at Theydon Garnon in 1676 was in all probability the slave-dealer of later days. Moreover, my inquiries tend to confirm in some measure the claim of descent from the Bonhams of Stanway Hall.

(1) SUSAN = SAMUEL THORWGOOD, = (2) SARAH.

WILLIAM THOROWGOOD, = ?
of London, linen draper. |

WILLIAM THORNGOOD,
Accountant-General
of the East India Co.,
d. intestate and unmarried
at Southgate,
12 Sept. 1705.

ANNE THOROWGOOD, = THOMAS BONHAM, of Theydon Park,
 alive in 1707, | yeoman and widower, aged about 30
 d. before 1711. | on 14 Oct. 1674.

SAMUEL BONHAM,
bapt. at Theydon Garnon,
3 Aug. 1676.

Pedigree composed from : R. T. Everitt (Portsmouth Public Library (R.9743)) ; P.R.O. *Chancery Proceedings* ; Church Registers.

The evidence all comes from the mother's side. The mother of this infant Samuel, Anne Thorowgood, was the daughter of one 'William Thorowgood of London, gent.' This is clearly proved by a lawsuit to which her husband, Thomas Bonham, was a party in 1711. The case itself is of no importance and only concerns a claim for money alleged to have been lent, but we learn from it that before 1711 William Thorowgood had died intestate and that his daughter Anne, Thomas Bonham's wife, who had had the administration of her father's estate, was also dead.

*P.R.O. Ch. Proc.
before 1714, C.10,
408/31, Bonham v.
Newman and others.*

Now Thorowgoods (spelt in half a dozen different ways) were as plentiful as blackberries in the Essex of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but I think there can be little doubt that Anne's father, William Thorowgood, sprang from a family of that name of Matching, Co. Essex, of which R. T. Everitt furnishes the accompanying pedigree. He is described therein as 'of London, linen draper', and his father's name was Samuel, which would account for the bestowal of that name upon his grandson. Matching is only a few miles from Bobbingworth where Thomas Bonham married Anne Thorowgood in 1674.

I had often wondered how Samuel the slave-dealer, if he were indeed the son of this Essex yeoman, had come to take to a seafaring life and become associated with the East India Co. My first impulse was to attribute this to the influence in the City and the shipping world of his supposed relations of the main Bonham line of Stanway Hall; but long before the date of this Samuel's birth the members of that branch of the family had scorned their connexion with the City and established themselves as country squires at Valence. But if we accept the parentage of Samuel now suggested we have a much easier solution of the problem, for his mother, Anne Thorowgood, had a brother, another William Thorowgood, who was Accountant-General of the old East India Co. 'and kept his office at their house in Threadneedle St.', so that he would be in a particularly good position to start his nephew's career in that Company in whose service he spent so many years. This younger William Thorowgood died at Southgate on 12 September 1705, intestate and unmarried, when Samuel Bonham would be twenty-nine years of age. His death in that year would account for the fact stated in the lawsuit of 1711, that it was his sister Anne, and not he, who was entrusted with the administration of their intestate father's estate.

The marriage of Thomas Bonham and Anne Thorowgood

may not have been influenced by any previous relations between the two families, but it is perhaps worth pointing out that such relations had in fact existed in comparatively recent times. A double Bonham-Thorowgood connexion had taken place in the family of William Bonham the Vintner of the main Stanway Hall line. One of his daughters, Helen Bonham (E.7), had married Henry Proby (alive in 1651), and Henry Proby's mother was Elizabeth Thorowgood, daughter of John Thorowgood of Temple Chelston, Co. Herts. Another daughter Anne (E.3) had married Benjamin Henshaw, and their son Charles Henshaw, who died in 1665, had married Elizabeth, daughter of Simon Thorowgood, citizen of London.

This completes the evidence up to date on the mother's side.

On the father's side the evidence is much more sketchy. Of Thomas Bonham, Samuel's father, I have discovered little more than what is contained in the entry of his marriage in the Bobbingworth register, viz. that at the time of his marriage in 1674 he was aged 'about 30', that he was a yeoman and widower and that he is styled 'of Theydon Park'. In the lawsuit referred to above he is styled 'of Bubbingworth'. In the register at Theydon Garnon there is an entry that Sarath (? Sarah), the wife of Thomas Bonham, was buried there on 6 June 1674. I take this to have been our Thomas's first wife and, if so, he lost little time in consoling himself, for on 15 October of the same year, little more than four months after his first wife's death, he married Anne Thorowgood.

I have a copy of a will of a Thomas Bonham 'of Theydon Mount' made in 1715. In my copy he is styled 'of Thoyndon Mount', but unless there be a place in the near neighbourhood called 'Thoyndon', I think this must be an error on the part of the transcriber for 'Theydon', for the executor of the estate is a yeoman of Navestock, Co. Essex, and Navestock is within a very few miles of Theydon Mount.

Although the will is dated 29 October 1715 it was not proved till 12 February 1724/5 and I take the latter date to have been that approximately of the death of the testator. The only relations mentioned are the son and heir, another inevitable Thomas with an unnamed wife, and four grandchildren, Thomas, John, Anne and Mary Bonham.

As far as dates are concerned, this might quite possibly be the will of the Thomas 'of Theydon Hall', who married Anne Thorowgood at about thirty years of age in 1674, but this would have made him 'about' eighty-one at the date

of his death. No mention is made of any son of the name of Samuel and it seems more likely that the testator was the son of this Thomas by his first wife Sarath and therefore the half-brother of our Samuel. He leaves everything to his son Thomas except a copyhold in North Weald Bassett, which he leaves to his grandson John Bonham. This copyhold was held of the Lord of the Manor of North Weald Bassett by copy of Court Roll and if the Manor records are still in existence they might afford valuable evidence as to this part of the family history.

I think that, in general, manorial records may prove more valuable than church registers and family wills in tackling the very intricate distribution of both the Bonham and Thorowgood families in this part of Essex, but this could only be handled adequately by an Essex man with sound local knowledge. The district might almost be called 'Bonham-Thorowgood country', for in a large number of villages I find these two families living cheek by jowl at almost any date from the sixteenth century onwards. My search has not been very exhaustive, but I already have records showing that at High Ongar there were Bonhams in 1599 and Thorowgoods in 1654; at Clavering there were Bonhams in 1687 and Thorowgoods in 1681; at Matching there were Bonhams in 1622 and Thorowgoods in 1638; at Bobbingworth there were Bonhams in 1674 and Thorowgoods in 1614; at Theydon Mount there were Bonhams in 1674 and Thorowgoods in 1597. Apart from these evidences of close neighbourly relations between Bonhams and Thorowgoods the records of Bonhams of the yeoman class in Essex from the middle of the sixteenth century are almost inexhaustible. I have found them established at Hatfield Broad Oak (alias Hatfield Regis) in 1558, at Stourton Massey in 1610, at Greensted in 1614, at Thundersley in 1579, at South Benfleet in 1611, at Canewdon in 1587, at North Weald in 1635 and at many other places. And about three out of every five of them seem to have been christened Thomas!

I have referred elsewhere to the strange muddles which amateur Bonham genealogists of the nineteenth century made over their ancestors, such as cheerfully transferring the Sir Walter Bonham who fought at the battle of Pinkie in 1547 to the seventeenth century and making him 'a Colonel on the side of the Royalists in the Civil Wars' and the father of Samuel Bonham the slave-dealer, who was born in 1644. But there is one of these flights of fancy which perhaps may deserve a little more attention. E. W. Bonham records that General Pinson Bonham, the slave-dealer's

grandson, who was born in 1762 and died in 1855, told one of his daughters that 'he knew he was descended from Thomas Bonham who married Miss Marney and resided near Hatfield Broad Oak'. This evidently refers to old Thomas Bonham of Stanway Hall (A.1) and his wife Catherine Marney. But why Hatfield Broad Oak? Hatfield Broad Oak is at the other end of the county from both Stanway Hall and Layer Marney and old Thomas Bonham and Catherine never lived anywhere near it. May it have been some old family tradition which moved old General Bonham to mention this rather obscure place?

Archdeaconry Court
of Middlesex, Essex
and Herts, Water 13.
Ibid., Raymonde 230.

I have in my possession copies of the wills of two brothers, William and Thomas Bonham, dated respectively 1558 and 1575. Both brothers style themselves of Hatfield Broad Oak and dispose of property there. This property seems to have passed to a yeoman branch of the Bonham family residing at Buckworth, Co. Hunts., and led to lawsuits in later generations, when it was claimed that William, the testator of 1558, was an idiot and incapable of making a valid will.

Ch. Proc., Sec. II,
Bundle 93, No. 18.

Ch. Proc. before 1714,
C.5, 35/9.

The whole matter is very obscure, but these Bonhams may have been the descendants of either Henry Bonham (B.4), the fourth son of old Thomas Bonham of Stanway Hall, who, according to his father's will, was to marry Margaret Abell, or of John, the disinherited son of William Bonham the stationer (Interlude A), and this new line of approach may perhaps be worth following up.

Here I must bring my story to an abrupt and ragged end. The war brought all research work to a standstill and I have only tried in these pages to put into some sort of order notes made before that catastrophe. I fear that, owing to old age, lack of local knowledge and difficulties of travel, there is little chance of my adding anything useful to this rather haphazard compilation, but I hope that if some day some member of the Bonham family may be stirred to continue the quest, he or she may find some use for it.

As already stated, I have not attempted to deal with the family history from Samuel the slave-dealer onwards, as this has already been exhaustively treated by E. W. Bonham and is clearly set forth down to the present holder of the Baronetcy created in 1852, Sir Anthony Bonham.

I fear that I have not contributed much to the genealogical side of the family history. I have corrected a few errors of earlier writers and have doubtless committed a great many more. My only achievement seems to be to have

traced the possible ancestry of Samuel the slave-dealer one generation further back by offering to the family the choice between a bricklayer of Stepney and an Essex yeoman. The Victorian ladies would not have thanked me.

APPENDIX I

INVENTORY OF SIR WALTER BONHAM

1551

1551. An Inventory of all the goodes and Catalls aswell moveables as unmoveables, money, plate, juells and other housholde stuf, w^{ch} were belonging and apperteigning to Sir Walter Bonham knight at the time of his decesse and remayning within the mansion hous of Sir William Sharrington knight, in the parish of Hakney in the countie of Midlx., —viewed and praised by Edward Tagg, letherseller and Henry Glyn Goldsmythe the xxxth daie of Octob^r in the ffifte yeer of the reigne of our sovrein Lord Edward the sixth, by the grace of God of England, ffraunce and Ireland king, defender of the faith and on earth of the Church of England and also of Ireland the Supreme Hedd.

viz.

In the hall

Imprimis a joyned table, ij fformes and a settle,	
praised at	vjs. viij <i>d</i> .
	Sum. vjs. viij <i>d</i> .

In the parlor

Item. The parlor hanged w ^t grene say	xxs.
Item a joyned table with a carpet therunto of grene cloth praised at	xijs.
Item. $\frac{1}{2}$ dosin of stooles, $\frac{1}{2}$ dosin of quissions wrought with nedle worke and $\frac{1}{2}$ dosin of grene quissions	vs.
Item. A joyned cupborde and carpet therunto praised at	iiijs.
Item. ij olde grene chaires praised at	vjs. viij <i>d</i> .
Item. A faire paire of Andirons, a fier shovell and a paire of tongs and a shrine, praised	xxvjs. viij <i>d</i> .
	Sum. lxiiijs. iiij <i>d</i> .

In the [blank]

Item. The chamber hanged w ^t yelowe and blue saie, praised at	lxs.
Item. ij stooles of yelow velvet quilted	ijs.
Item. A redde chaire	xij <i>d</i> .
Item. A pair of andirons, a fier shovell and a pair of tongs, praised all at	vs.
	Sum. Lxviijs.

In the [blank]

Item. The chamber hanged w ^t olde redd and blewe say, praised at	lxs.
Item. A joyned bedstede	xls.
Item. The Tester of crymson velvet and purple satin, the curtens of crymsin sarcenet and purple, w ^t the fetherbedd, bolster, and all things thereto belonging	iiij ^{li} .
Item. A joyned table w ^t a carpet therto	ijs.
Item. A fflaundes cheste, praised at	xxd.
Sum. ix ^{li} . iiij ^s . viij ^d .	

In the [blank]

Item. The chamber hanged w ^t grene saie, praised at	xxs.
Item. A joyned Bedstede, a tester of yelow and blewe sarcenet quilted, w th a fetherbedde, bolster, quilt and all thynges therunto belonging	iiij ^{li} .
Item. A cupborde w ^t a carpet therto	iiij ^s .
Item. A grene chair	vjs. viij ^d .
Item. ij little joyned stooles	iiij ^d .
Item. A cheste w ^t a little cheste	iiij ^s .
Item. A paire of andirons, a fier shovel and a pair of tonges	vs.
Item. A warmyng panne	xij ^d .
Item. In the same chamber, a pallet w ^t a little olde coverlet and ij mattresses	xxs.
Sum. vij ^{li} . xij ^d .	

In the [blank]

Item. The chamber hanged w ^t painted clothes, w ^t a Bedstede and a tester of redde and blewe silke, and also the curtens of redde and blew sarcenet w ^t a fether bedde, bolster, quilt and all thinges therunto belonging, praised at	xls.
Item. A cheste	xxd.
Sum. xlis. viij ^d .	

In the [blank]

Item. The chamber hanged w ^t painted saie, a fetherbedde, bolster, bedsted and all things therunto belonging, and ij joyned chests	xxs.
Sum. xxs.	

In the [blank]

Item. The Chamber hanged w ^t a stayned clothes, praised at	ijs. vj ^d .
Item. ij faire joyned presses	xls.
Sum. xlijs. vj ^d .	

In the thre servnts chambers

Item. Thre borted Bedstedes, iij fetherbeddes, iij mattresses and all things therunto belonging, praised all at	xls.
Sum. xls.	

Lynnen.

Item. xxx ^t paires of shets, course and fyne, praised at	viiij ^{li} .
Item. x paires of pillowberes	xls.
Item. xx ^{ti} tableclothes, corse and fyne	xls.
Item. viij dos. of napkins, diap and other	xxxij ^s .
Item. Oon dos. of towells diap and other	xxs.

Sum. xiiij^{li}. xijs.

Apparell (and other furnitur)

Item. An olde clothe night gowne, garded with velvet and furred with conies	xs.
Item. A fyne cote of black cloth and a Spanish cloke	xls.
Item. A Spanish cloke w ^t a cape of velvet and garded w ^t velvet	xls.
Item. A buff Jerkyn garded w ^t velvet w ^t Buttons of silver and gilt	xxs.
Item. A white Spanish lether Jerkyn edged w ^t golde parchemet lace and w ^t gilt buttons	xs.
Item. An olde riding cote garded w ^t velvet	vs.
Item. A pair of olde hoses of blake satten	iijs. iiij ^d .
Item. A paire of white hoses welted in velvet	vs.
Item. vij shertes	xls.
Item. A Taffata hatt w ^t a brouch and a plume of white fethers	xxvs.
Item. A knit hatt w ^t a blacke fether	iijs. iiij ^d .
Item. A rapiar and a dagger	vjs. viij ^d .
Item. A sworde and a Bukler	xxs.
Item. ij pairs white dimilawn harness	iiij ^{li} . xs.
Item. Ashurt of mayle lyned w ^t fustian and garded w ^t velvet	xxs.
Item. A stile (i.e. steel) Terget and a mace	ijs.
Item. A Dagge w ^t iij chardges	vs.
Item. ij paires of velvet shoes	iijs. iiij ^d .
Item. An old aunsen (?)	xij ^d .
Item. ij plumes of fethers blacke	vs.
Item. A skarf of yelow and blak sarcenet	vs.
Item. A pair of wynter bootes and gilt spurres	iijs. iiij ^d .
Item. A cloke bagge and ij souldiers cotes	xs.
Item. A Bowe, and ij quivers w ^t arowes	xvs.
Item. A Pollaxe	ijs.
Item more, oon Gowne of Blacke velvet furred w ^t conies	iiij ^{li} .
Item. Oon Cote of blak Taffata garded w ^t velvet	xxxs.
Item. Oon paire of hoses, the breaches of Blacke velvet	xxs.
Item. Oon dublet of blak Satten	xs.
Item. A nyght gowne of blak satten furred w th sables	xli.

Item.	ij velvet cots furred w ^t conies	iiij <i>li</i> .
Item.	A cote of blak satten garded w ^t velvet	xxxxs.
Item.	A Spanish lether cote furred w ^t squyrell and garded in velvet	xxs.
Item.	A frisead klok	xs.
Item.	A blak spanish lether Jerkyn furred	xs.
Item.	A grene cote	vjs. viij <i>d</i> .
Item.	A white Taffata Dublet	vis. viij <i>d</i> .
Item.	A white fustian Dublet	iijs. iiij <i>d</i> .
Item.	A fyne canvas Dublet	iijs. iiij <i>d</i> .
Item.	iiij paires of hoses, the breaches velvet	lxs.
Item.	A crossbowe and a long bowe	xxs.
Item.	A saddell, the seate of velvet quilted, and the harnes of velvet	xxs.
Item.	iiij other saddells for geldings	xxvjs. viij <i>d</i> .
Item.	iiij stele saddells	xls.
Item.	A faire blak harnesse w ^{ch} was for hym- self	iiij <i>li</i> .
Item.	A Terget of plate	ijs.
	Sum.	lviii <i>li</i> . viijs. viij <i>d</i> .
	Catall.	
Item.	Oon Gelding price	xs.
Item.	Oon Cowe praised at	xiijs. iiij <i>d</i> .
	Sum.	xxiijs. iiij <i>d</i> .
	Plate, Jewells and reddie money.	
Item.	A chayne of Crowne golde waieng xvij onz., lacking of q ^r gold onz.	xlvi <i>li</i> . viijs.
Item.	Oon ring of golde w ^t a diall and seale in it, and a pair of brasetts, w ^t W.B. in eidy of them, of golde, pondering in all [blank] onz.	v <i>li</i> .
Item.	Oon ring of golde w ^t a table diamonde in it esteemed at	lxs.
Item.	ij cappes of velvet garnished w ^t agletts worth	v <i>li</i> .
Item.	A Potindish of silver and gilt w ^t a cover pondering xx onz. iiij Qrters	ciijs. ix <i>d</i> .
Item.	A salt of silver and gilt pondering vij onz.	xxxvijs. v <i>d</i> .
Item.	$\frac{1}{2}$ dosin of spones, pondering viij onz. quarter	xxxvijs. ob
Item.	A casting bottell of silver gilt and pondering vj onz. $\frac{1}{2}$	xxixs. iiij <i>d</i> .
Item.	A glasse corded w ^t silver and gilt, pondering iiij onz.	xvijs.
Item.	he had in redie money, when he died, in his purse	xiiij <i>li</i> . vjs. viij <i>d</i> .
	xx	
	Sum.	iiijvj <i>li</i> . i <i>d</i> . ob.
	Vessell and other implem ^{ts} in the kitchin.	
Item.	A Basun and Ewer	iiijs.

Item. ij other basuns	xijd.
Item. $\frac{1}{2}$ dozen of pewter pottes	xijs.
Item. The pewter vessell in the kitchin all praised at	xls.
Item. viij candelsticks, whereof iiij of pewter	vjs.
Item. ij chafyndisshes of lattin	ijs. viijd.
Item. iiij brasse pottes	vjs. viijd.
Item. iiij kettels	vs.
Item. iiij chafers	vs.
Item. A pairr of andirons, fire panne and tonges and iiij spittes	vs.
Item. ij gredirons and a dripping pan	ijs.
Item. A frieing panne	xijd.
Item. A spice mortar and a pestell	xxd.
Item. ij chopping knives	iiijd.
Item. A bulting tubbe w ^t ij other tubbs	ijs.
Item. ij chāber pottes	xxd.

Sum. iiij*li*. xvjs.

Debtes owing to Sir Walter Boneham knight
by sundry persons

Imprimis. ffraunces Barentyne and Henry
Persalve Esquiers do owe unto him for the which
they stond bounden by recognisaunce to be paid
at Christmas next

cccxxx*li*.

Item. Sir John Gresham the younger, knight,
oweth unto him, for the which he stondeth
bounden by recognisaunce, to be paied the xxiiijth
of Aprill next ensuing the date hereof, or ells to
incurre the penalte of forgoing certen lands moer-
gaged for the same

ccccx*li*.

Item. Sir Charles Brandon, knight, oweth hym,
for the payment whereof the same stondeth boun-
den by recognisaunce

cx*li*.

Item. My Lorde Darcy oweth him for a moile
(? mule)

cs.

Item. Sir John Greshm the younger oweth

lxvis. viijd.

Item. Mr. John Paston oweth him

xxvis. viijd.

Item. Mr. John Thistletwate oweth him

lxs.

Item. Another Manne oweth him

xls.

Item. Ther is due to the said Sir Walter Bonhm
knight of the K^{gs} My^{tie} for his wagies being behind
from midsummer day to the xjth of August then
next ensuing, viz. for xlix days, at ijs. vjd. the day,
in all

vili. ijs. vjd.

c

Sum. ix*li*. xvs. xd.

Sum totall of all the gooddes and catalles,
money, plate, iuells, debtes and other things above
mentioned belonging to Sir Walter Bonhm knight,

xx*li*.
miiijxv

the tyme of his decesse, according as the same were prised and valued by the praisers above said, amounting to

xiijs.xd.ob.
 { £1,095
 13s. 10½d.

Debts owing by Sir Walter Bonhm, knight, to sundry persons at the tyme of his decesse, as hereafter flowth

Imprimis. The same oweth to the Lord Thomas Gray

cli.

Item. The same owed to John Calverley, citizen and draper of London

lxijjs.

Item. The same owed to Mrs. Betenson of London, Grocer, as appearith by her bill

lviiijs.

Item. The same owed to Thomas Wentr for money by him disbursed for and about certen acknowledgeages and enrolments

xvijs.

Item. Owing by the saied Sir Walter Bonham to his Sadler, as appearith by his Bill

xvs.

Item. The same owed to John Sole a blak smyth dwelling in Smythfeld for shoing

vs. vid.

Item. The same owed to Kynwelmarsh for meat and drink

xixs.

Item. The same owed to two armorers for keping and dressing of his harnesses

xxs.

Item. The same owed to Edward Arundell for meat and drink

xls.

Item. The same owed to Edward Bonhm of London, mercer, for silke, cloth, ready money and other things bought, provided and delivered by him to the saidd Sir Walter Bonhm, as by a bill of the parcells appearith, the sum of

xlvi. vjs.

Sum of debts owing by Sir

{ xlxiijli.

Walter Bonhm

{ ijs. vid.

Other necessary chardges laied out by th'

executors of the said Sir Walter Bonhm knight.

Imprimis, the chardges of the funerall of the said Sir Walter Bonhm every way, as appearith by a Booke of the parcells therof

lxxvijs. ix d.

Item. Given to the praisers, viz. to Edward Tagge and Henry Glyn above named for their labours

xs.

Sum. iiijli. vijs. ix d.

Exhibit' erat husjumodi Inventarium.

xj die mensis Januarii Anno Domini millimo quingen^o li^o per Richardum Starkey Noie executorum pro pleno Inventario omnium bonorum, etc.

Thomas Argall.

APPENDIX II

THE contrast between the fortunes of the two parties to the sale of Great Wishford is so striking that it seems to merit a note.

While the unfortunate Walter Bonham, the seller, fades out of the picture in a mist of debt and penury, Richard Grobham, the buyer, and all those associated with him in the transaction make their entry in a glare of prosperity. Even at this late date they represent the new men of the Tudor period, with the background of the spoliation of the Church and that odd mixture of savage brutality and high culture which produced almost simultaneously such contrasts as the Hartgill murders and the building of Longford Castle.

Grobham himself seems to have belonged to the small squirearchy of Somerset and was born at Bishop's Lydiard in that county, but he owed his wealth and position to the fact that he became the steward of Sir Thomas Gorges.

Here again, in the case of Sir Thomas Gorges, we find a young man making a great position for himself at Court in true Tudor fashion. Thomas Gorges started in life with no very great advantages, for though he came of an ancient and noble family long established at Wraxall in Gloucestershire, he was a fifth son with no particular prospects. He was born in 1536 and came as a young man to the Court of Queen Elizabeth and was soon in high favour with the Queen. But it was his marriage which was the real making of him.

His wife was Helena Snachenberg, a Swede of good family, who, at the age of fifteen, had come to England in 1565 in the suite of Princess Cecilia of Sweden. This Princess, a sister of King Eric of Sweden and wife of the Margrave of Baden, had made the journey to England in order to press her brother's suit for the hand of Queen Elizabeth. Her sisterly solicitude surely deserved more success than it got, for the journey from Sweden entailed considerable hardships. It took the party more than a year, for Sweden was not on good terms with Denmark at the time and they had to travel overland by way of Finland, Poland, Lithuania, Prussia, Dantzic, Antwerp, Bruges and Calais.

But though Queen Elizabeth had no use for her royal Swedish suitor she was evidently attracted by the young Swedish girl in Princess Cecilia's suite and made her one of her own maids of honour. When Princess Cecilia left England, Helena Snachenberg stayed behind and in the following year (1566), though

still only sixteen years of age, was married off to William Parr, Marquess of Northampton. He was a brother of Katherine Parr, the last wife and widow of Henry VIII, and must have been old enough to be her grandfather. He died in 1571 and the young widow returned to the Court as one of the Queen's ladies. Here she and Thomas Gorges must have been much together and in 1580 he married her secretly without the Queen's consent. This was always a heinous crime in the Queen's eyes and she reacted in the usual way on this occasion, and Gorges was clapped into prison. But his wife's extraordinary influence with the Queen soon procured him his pardon and he was set at liberty. It was probably largely due to this influence that he was knighted in 1586 and given a large number of lucrative appointments, including that of the Governorship of Hurst Castle. It was when a Spanish galleon was wrecked near this place that Helena begged it of the Queen. The request was granted, and the cargo of the wrecked ship proved to be of such immense value that Gorges was enabled to finish the building on a lavish scale of Longford Castle which he had begun in 1578 and had had to suspend from lack of funds. It was finished in 1591.

Sir Thomas Gorges died in 1610 and in his will (P.C.C. Wingfield 64) bequeathed 'to my lovinge ould servant Sir Richard Grobham knight my second best gelding with all its furniture'. His widow Helena lived on till 1635 (aged eighty-five) and was buried beside him in Salisbury Cathedral, where their son Baron Gorges of Dundalk (cr. 1620) erected a gorgeous monument to their memory in 1635.

Helena Gorges, who was generally known by the title of Marchioness of Northampton, which she bore in virtue of her first marriage, must have been a very remarkable woman. In a Court which was riddled with intrigue she succeeded, although a foreigner, in obtaining an influence over Queen Elizabeth which lasted until that Queen's death, and she acted as chief mourner at the Queen's funeral. She seems indeed to have inspired universal love and admiration. In his 'Colin Clout's come home again' Edmund Spenser praises her as Mansilia and says :

No lesse praiseworthie is Mansilia,
Best known by bearing up great Cynthia's [Queen Elizabeth's] traine,
She is the patterne of true womanhead
And only mirrhor of feminitie :
Worthy next after Cynthia to tread,
As she is next to her in nobilitie.

I have dealt with the Gorges¹ family at some length, for although they were not directly concerned in the purchase of

¹ The account of the Gorges family is taken from an article on 'The Gorges Monument in Salisbury Cathedral', by Canon J. M. J. Fletcher, in *W.A.M.*, Vol. XLVI, pp. 16-34.

Great Wishford they formed the setting in which Richard Grobham, as their agent, attained the wealth and position which enabled him to buy the property. He doubtless got his share of the rich booty found in the Spanish galleon which his mistress had begged of the Queen.

His relations with his employers seem to have been particularly friendly, for in addition to the extract from Sir Thomas Gorges' will already given, referring to him as 'my loving old servant', we find in Grobham's own will (P.P.C. 68 Ridley, published in *Wilts. N. & Q.*, Vol. V, pp. 32-9) made in 1628, the year before he died, that he leaves £100 in money or plate at her choice to 'the Right ho'ble the Lady Margaret [obviously an error on the part of the transcriber for "Marchioness"] of Northampton, my ho'ble good lady and mistress and I desire God to reward her for all the good that she hath done to me'. He also leaves 100 marks to his godson Richard Gorges, son of the Lord Edward Gorges who erected the Gorges monument in Salisbury Cathedral, and grandson of Sir Thomas and Helena.

I have not found out much about Sir Richard Grobham beyond the fact that he came of a good Somerset family, amassed great wealth under the protection of the Gorges and died in possession of manors or lands at Great Wishford, Steeple Langford, Stapleford, West Kington, Nettleton, Netheravon, Combe Compton, Bemerton and Quidhampton: the Hundred of Malmesbury, the Hundred and Borough of Highworth, the advowsons of Wishford and Nettleton and Rectory of Enford, all in Wilts. (Jackson's *Aubry*, p. 148), and a house in London in Chancery Lane. Not a bad showing for one who had started life with no land at all; the Gorges must surely have been generous masters and the Spanish galleon of Hurst Castle very richly laden.

I do not know in what year Grobham was knighted, but it must have been before 1610 when Sir Thomas Gorges refers to him in his will as Sir Richard. His chief local claim to fame is the story that he slew single-handed in Groveley Wood a huge wild boar which for years had been the terror of the neighbourhood. This feat of chivalry and the fact that the sword with which he is supposed to have performed the deed for long hung in Great Wishford Church, together with his helmet, conjure up a vision of a romantic knight of the mediaeval type. But his will, which is the most personal relic which we have of him, seems to reveal a figure quite destitute of romance, at any rate of that particular kind. It is immensely long, consisting of 'a paper book containing 15 sheets of paper', and deals with all his property with precision and in great detail. But it also reveals a person who was very much ahead of his times in what we should now call 'social services'. He shows particular interest in the housing and clothing of the poor and makes provision for almshouses, schools and the apprenticeship of poor children. He also refers to a habit which he had of distributing tracts in the shape of 'little catechisme bookes',

which the recipients were expected to learn 'by heart' and to say 'all the prayers in them conteyned and sett downe'. The impression given by the will in fact is much more that of a godly man of the seventeenth century than of the dashing knight of romance.

Grobham died in 1629 at the age of seventy-eight. His wife was Margaret Whitmore of a Shropshire family and he makes liberal provision for her in his will, referring to her as 'my good, virtuous and loving wife, who hath truly deserved much more than I have or can give her'. She was to forfeit most of the benefits conferred by the will if she married again; this she lost but little time in doing, for in the following year (Oct. 1630) she married, as his second wife, Sir John St. John of Lydiard Tregoze.

But this was not the only provision in Sir Richard's will which went awry. Sir Richard Hoare in his *Modern Wiltshire* states that Grobham's heiress was his sister Joan Howe and all subsequent writers seem to have followed him. But this is not at all in accordance with the terms of the will, which clearly shows that the heir was to be his nephew, George Grobham, the son of his brother John Grobham of Bromfield, Co. Somerset, and that he was not to come into his inheritance 'untill he shall accomplish the age of 22 years'. The brother John Grobham was still alive, as also was a sister named Grace Grobham, but the sister Joan, his reputed heiress, had as a matter of fact predeceased him: she had married John Howe of Compton, Co. Gloucester, and left two sons, John and George Howe, who are mentioned in the will as two of the executors. John Howe was given for life the Prebend of Upavon (alienated at the time of the dissolution of the monasteries) and George Howe, 'my nephew and servant', was given for life the tenement which he occupied in Great Wishford. Other provisions were made for these nephews, but most certainly neither of them was to be his heir.

How the property eventually came to John Howe is not clear. Sir Richard Grobham's will was proved at London on 15 July 1629, 'on oath of Dame Margaret Grobham, John Howe and George Howe, to whom administration was given'. A further note states that it was proved on 20 December 1639, 'on oath by George Grobham, etc.' This seems to indicate that at that date George Grobham, the heir, had 'accomplished the age of 22 years' and come into his inheritance. But there had evidently been some trouble in the meantime, for in 1633 John Grobham of Bromfield, 'father and guardian of George Grobham' (the heir), had brought a suit against Sir John St. John, Dame Margaret his wife (Sir Richard Grobham's widow) and John and George Howe, the executors of Sir Richard's will (*Wilts. N. & Q.*, Vol. IV, p. 525). What it was all about I do not know, but enough has been said to show that Hoare's statement that Joan Howe was Sir Richard Grobham's heiress

was quite unfounded, though it is true that the property did eventually come to her son John Howe, probably on the death of his cousin George Grobham without an heir.

John Howe was the ancestor of two noble families, the Lords Chedworth (now extinct) and Howe (now represented by the present Earl Howe).

The very elaborate and costly Grobham tomb in Great Wishford Church must have been put up by Sir Richard Grobham in his lifetime. It bears the effigies of himself and his wife Margaret. This lady had the curious experience of seeing her own effigy on two tombs during her lifetime, for her second husband, Sir John St. John, also erected his own tomb during his lifetime and on it placed the effigies of his two wives, one on either side of him, and acclaimed the virtues of Margaret, although she was still living when the tomb was erected. Under which, if either, of these monuments her remains repose is unknown. Did she perhaps marry a third husband and find a last resting-place elsewhere under a third effigy?

In the Registry of Salisbury Cathedral is a voluminous manuscript book of over 250 large folio pages drawn up to the order of Sir Richard Grobham and containing lists of his possessions, items of expenditure made on behalf of Lady Gorges when in attendance on Queen Elizabeth and other personal matters. It is known as the Grobham Cartulary or Commonplace Book, and, so far as I know, has never been transcribed or used for reference, though it probably contains much of interest. The Corporation of Salisbury also own a portrait of Sir Richard Grobham.

This Cartulary, his portrait, his tomb, and his will are the only relics of Sir Richard Grobham that remain to us and they give us a picture of a highly successful man of the world, in sharp contrast to Walter Bonham, who ceded to him with such reluctance the property that he had sold to him and which his ancestors had held for over 300 years.

The Hyde¹ brothers, who acted for Sir Richard Grobham in the matter of the mortgage of Great Wishford (probably in a legal capacity, for the family was much given to the Law), were perhaps more interesting than their principal. They certainly afford an even more striking instance of the way in which a family could rise to power and wealth in Tudor times by attaching themselves to a person of influence.

The father of the brothers Laurence and Nicholas Hyde was another Laurence Hyde who came of a good Wiltshire family of no very great consequence, but he hitched his wagon to a very brilliant star in the person of Sir John Thynne of Longleat and made a comfortable journey to prosperity. He seems to have acted as a general factotum to his master, who in his turn owed much to a still greater luminary, the Protector Somerset,

¹ See 'Notes on the Hydes of Wilts. and Cheshire', by J. J. Hammond, in *Wilts. N. & Q.*, Vol. VI.

who was his patron and counted for much in the establishment of the Thynne fortunes.

By his first marriage old Laurence Hyde must have had a strong personal interest in the feud between the Protector Somerset, Sir John Thynne and Sir John Bonham on the one side and Charles, Lord Stourton on the other, which rent all North Wiltshire in the middle of the sixteenth century and ended in the tragic murder of the Hartgills, father and son, by Lord Stourton and the hanging of that nobleman in Salisbury in 1557 (see my *History of the Manor of Hazelbury* and Canon Jackson's article in *W.A.M.*, Vol. VIII, p. 242). Old Laurence Hyde's first wife was Mary Hartgill and she was apparently a sister of William Hartgill who, with his son John, was brutally murdered by Lord Stourton. On 22 November 1558 Laurence Hyde writes from Longleat to Sir John Thynne, who was then in London, asking him to use his interest 'on behalf of my sister Hartgill, that yet she may have the reversion of th' inheritance of Kylmyngton'. Kilmyngton had been the property of the murdered William Hartgill. Hyde refers to his 'protégée' as 'my sister'; she was apparently in reality his wife's sister-in-law, but the use of 'sister' for such a relationship was not uncommon at the time.

The savage brutality of the Hartgill murders savours more of the twelfth than the sixteenth century, but it is only fair to say that the Hartgills had given much provocation. William Hartgill, who had been steward to Charles, Lord Stourton's father, was strongly suspected of sharp practice in his stewardship and, when dismissed, went over to the rival party and took service with the Protector Somerset, and was put in charge of his woods at Maiden Bradley. Although the Protector was executed in 1552, five years before the Hartgill tragedy, the rival parties in the feud were already pretty clearly defined during his lifetime. John Hartgill, the son, went over to the service of Sir John Thynne at Longleat.

Old Laurence Hyde's second wife was Anne Sibell. By his first wife Mary Hartgill he had one son, Charles, and by Anne Sibell he had four sons, Robert, Laurence, Henry and Nicholas. He died in 1590 and was buried on 16 June of that year at Tisbury. There is a brass to his memory in the church there.

'Laurence Hyde of the Close, New Sarum and Nicholas Hyde of the Middle Temple', the mortgagees of Great Wishford in 1597, were the two sons of those names of old Laurence Hyde mentioned above. The house in the Close inhabited by Laurence had been granted to him 'to be held in fealty' on 6 March, 1549-50 (*Patent Rolls*, Ed. VI, Vol. 2). It had been the house of the priests serving the Chantry of Lord Robert Hungerford and had been confiscated at the dissolution of the monasteries. It is now (1948) No. 54 the Close and in the occupation of the Cathedral Librarian.

Laurence Hyde seems to have followed the family profession

of the Law. He married Barbara Castilian (his brother Robert married her sister Anne), and though he himself did not attain to any great distinction, he fathered two distinguished sons. His second son Robert became Chief Justice of the Common Pleas in 1663, and his fourth son Alexander was Bishop of Salisbury from 1665 to 1667.

'Nicholas Hyde of the Middle Temple', the other mortgagee of Great Wishford, was also a man of the Law and attained to higher distinction in that profession than his brother Laurence, for he was Chief Justice of the Common Pleas in 1626-7 and was made a knight. He married Mary Swaine, lived in Marlborough and bought the Manor of Hinton Daubney in Hampshire, where he died on 25 August 1631. He had a large family, but none of them attained to very great distinction.

But it was through their brother Henry that the two mortgagees of Great Wishford became great-grand-uncles of two Queens of England.

Henry was the third son of old Laurence Hyde and Anne Sibell. He married Mary, daughter of Edward Langford of Trowbridge, a prosperous 'clothman' of good but not particularly distinguished family. They settled at Dinton and later moved to Salisbury, where Henry lived a quiet and uneventful life. On 20 February 1609 a son was born to them and christened Edward. He became in time the great Earl of Clarendon, Lord High Chancellor of England. His daughter Anne Hyde was the first wife of the Duke of York (afterwards James II) and mother of Queen Mary, the wife of William III, and of Queen Anne.

This completes my story of the contrast. On the one hand we have Grobham and his background of the Gorges family and his successors the Howes, founding two British peerages.

With him are the Hydes with their background of Sir John Thynne of Longleat and his background of the Protector Somerset, and with two Queens of England to the future credit of the family.

On the other hand is Walter Bonham, with a noble ancestry dating back to Norman times but with no great Tudor nobleman to back him, who disappears so thoroughly that even the place of his death and burial is unknown. The last pathetic record that we have of him shows him borrowing money at Goodwood in Sussex.

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